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*by William J. Grace*

## THE COSMIC SENSE IN SHAKESPEREAN TRAGEDY

CAN the key be found to Shakespeare's conception of tragedy, an idea not necessarily formally conceptualized by Shakespeare but instinctively derived from his knowledge based upon experience?

We believe that such a key can be provided that is historically and aesthetically accurate, but which differs considerably from the views put forward by A. C. Bradley.

Such a key must, first of all, be historically accurate. Walter Clyde Curry in his book, "Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns," seems to us to have given a valuable historical perspective of Shakespeare's philosophical ideas. A. C. Bradley, not taking into account the contemporary philosophical notions of Shakespeare's own day and following in his own thinking the antinomies of Hegel, seems to us to have missed Shakespeare's own inner and profound sense of tragedy. A. C. Bradley, nevertheless, had an understanding of a certain mysticism (I am using the word, I hope, divorced from its usual banal associations) that is distinctly Shakespearean, but he did not correctly formulate it.

Now Shakespeare's tragic sense has no Hegelian premise. Rather it is the result of a curious and instinctive blending of certain leading ideas derived from Renaissance Platonism and from a traditional philosophy that, in its popular form, had been over-theologized and missed the spirit of inquiry. Mr. Curry has traced with discernment many of the points in contemporary philosophy-theology that definitely went into the stuff of Shakespeare's thought.

What we wish to add is an insight into what is universally valid in Shakespeare's understanding of tragedy. In other words, we believe that the key provided is also aesthetically accurate—it approximates fairly closely the emotions Shakespeare himself felt and intended the audience to feel.

## II

Now it is our contention that Shakespeare's understanding of tragedy is directly related to his "cosmic sense"—a sense that enables him to see the relations of the particular to the universal, of the microcosm to the macrocosm, not only in a contemporary but also in a highly personal, vivid way. Into this cosmic sense enters what might be called an organic supernaturalism. By this term it is implied that Shakespeare never conceives of the natural world as functioning with unlimited autonomy, but, on the contrary, he considers it intimately connected with the supernatural. Nevertheless, as a fiction, and as a deliberate dramatic irony in order to bring about tragic pity, Shakespeare deliberately blacks out from the conclusions of his tragedies the organic supernaturalism that is yet deeply part of his thinking.

The organic supernaturalism of Shakespeare is intimately bound up with contemporary conceptions of good and evil. Definitely entering into his thought is the cosmos or world of organically related goods. From Renaissance Platonism he derives a strong awareness of the transcendent good, the good that is inexhaustible though endlessly giving and diffusing itself. This is the good, the "heavenly bountifulnesse" of Castiglione, humanist of the court of Urbino and author of *THE BOKE OF THE COURTIER*, and of the Renaissance Platonists generally. This is the good that connects me with my fellow men, with the angels, with the whole universe

of goods. The peculiar function of the evil act is precisely to cut me off from this transcendence. The act leaves me alone with myself and the narrow, temporal advantages so resulting, like Esau with his mess of pottage. But I am forever cut off from "the heavenly bountifulnesse."

Now Shakespeare's power of insight is based upon permanently valid truths, though their mode of expression belongs to a definite time and place. From one's own experience it can be seen that there is something important in these concepts. The good man is the free man—free in the sense that the universal is accessible to him. For it is in a profound sense that truth, the things of the spirit, goodness, can be everyone's possession. They certainly cannot constitute property in the *bourgeois* sense. In a certain sense, it may be said that the good of another man is as much mine as it is his own. On the other hand, the evil act is my own.

Why is Iago so evil? For one thing, he is a complete egoist. He has no cosmic referent—he deliberately denies organic supernaturalism. Like Edmund, he follows the law of will in regard to a nature that has been denied its higher referents; his atheism blinds him to reality. Since to Shakespeare the supernatural is always profoundly true, these characters are meant to shock us in their deliberate lack of discernment.

Iago is evil because he is cut off from the "heavenly bountifulnesse". In fact, he is cut off from anything transcendent, for to Shakespeare evil can only be transcendent in a negative sense. Shakespeare's approach to this matter is traditionally scholastic. Scholasticism in not admitting of any "positive" evil offers a distinct contrast to the Manichean conception of an evil that is the coequal of the good.

Though evil is not coequal in power to the good, nevertheless the good can be inconvenienced, obstructed, and perverted by it. In the contingent and particularized world evil may gain a temporal triumph, through its ability to negate the fulfillment of good in the temporal order.

Iago's only cosmic referent lies in his power to destroy. He does, in fact, destroy. But the question implicit in Shakespeare's tragedy is whether Desdemona and Othello are destroyed in the

transcendent world as they have been destroyed in the world of place and time. Of Iago we have no doubt—he has lost himself for ever. He has only the vacuum of himself, a person emptied of being, of the “heavenly bountifulnesse”.

Shakespeare's cosmic sense is bound up with a very rigid sense of justice, and this must be kept in mind before we examine his cosmic sense in relation to tragedy. For Shakespeare evil can only in one sense be transcendent. The evil act carries with it a transcendent guilt, for it has indirectly affected the whole body of goods—not just one good. Shakespeare has, in fact, a very concrete and imaginistic sense of retribution—“The very stones prate of my whereabouts,” says Macbeth. Hamlet knows that “murther, though it hath no tongue, will speak with most miraculous organ.” Macbeth's crime, for example, not merely involves personal responsibility. It is a fact, too, that “heaven's cherubim, hors'd”

Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the deed in every eye,  
That tears shall drown the wind. . . .

### III

Just as the evil person is deficient in a cosmic sense, in an awareness of the “heavenly bountifulnesse”, so the good person possesses the cosmic sense in a heightened degree. Hamlet, for example, suffers because of his cosmic sense. It is also because of his cosmic sense that he is a hero. Macbeth also suffers because of his cosmic sense of sin—he knows only too vividly the one way in which evil can be transcendent. Hamlet, on the other hand, is the expiator, rather than the performer of crimes.

To the creator of *Hamlet* it was obvious that the highest type of mind differs from the rudimentary type of the gravedigger or from the cunning type of an Iago by a greatly heightened sensitivity to affairs outside its own narrow, personal orbit. Hamlet suffers the full burden of the time, the ancestral crime, the oppressor's wrongs, the proud man's contumely. Hamlet, capable of nearly unlimited suffering, has seen the dead dominate his life. He has wondered what has been meant by man in the face of nearly universal negation. The gravedigger, on the other hand, with his phlegmatic nerves, is not worried by any fact other than his particular assignment at the time. “A tanner will last you

nine year," he observes, if, of course, he will hold "the laying in." The cosmic sense with its deep knowledge of good—"What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty!"—is also aware in a complementary sense of the ironic contrast offered by evil and by stupidity.

#### IV

Shakespeare is unique in our literature in possessing the cosmic sense, with its organic supernaturalism, to an extraordinary degree. Hamlet alone is sufficient witness of the fact. The relationship of the natural to the supernatural is no more theory, no more intellectual concept for Shakespeare.

The most formal and traditional expression of this cosmic sense is to be found in *MACBETH*; its most powerful and poetic expression in *KING LEAR*; its most intellectual expression in *HAMLET*, which may justly be called, following Dover Wilson, an essay in the mystery of being—"to be or not to be" remaining much more than a purely speculative problem. *OTHELLO* more specifically reveals a sense of evil—the temporary victory of the egoistic and the individuated against the universal and the free. . . . but in no Manichean sense, for Iago is left with his own barrenness, a successful destroyer of himself.

Shakespeare takes the traditional view that the soul is nourished and lives by the cosmos outside itself, by the "heavenly bountifulnesse" of the Platonist, by the Grace of the Christian. It may be said that Shakespeare derives his cosmic sense specifically from Judaic-Christian tradition. The broad moral principles, the meaning of good and evil, the conception of human nature in its essence and in its being and becoming, are to be understood, as Mr. Walter Clyde Curry has shown, in what may loosely be referred to as "scholastic" terms. But, nevertheless, Shakespeare surpasses any narrow adhering to traditional philosophy, which, in any case, had in his day become somewhat obscured and decadent. Particularly in his accurate psychological discernments, his knowledge of the dream world and the world of the unconscious, he shows an extraordinary sensitiveness to types of knowledge that have only begun to be made explicit in our own

time. His Freudian sense never, of course, goes so far as to become mechanistic, automatic, or destroy responsibility.

Like most intellectuals of his time, he was intensely interested in the inter-relationship of transcendence and immanence. Hamlet's thought, for example, is not merely a see-saw, in the words of Wilson Knight, between "grace and the hell of cynicism"; Shakespeare's thought does not merely run from "What a piece of work is a man! how noble is reason" to "unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art"; it is also explicitly taken up with the Platonic conception of the eternal perfection and the eternal beauty imperfectly or corruptly reflected in the world of sense. Castiglione in the *BOKE OF THE COURTIER* has thus explained the "divine idea"—which is always to be found on the periphery of Shakespearean tragedy:

What happie wonder, what blessed abashment may we reckon that to bee, that taketh the soules, which come to have sight of the heavenly beautie? What sweet flame? What sweet incense may a man believe that to be, which ariseth of the fountaine of the soveraigne and right beautie? Which is the original of all other beautie which never encreaseth nor diminisheth, alwaies beautifull, and of it selfe, as well as on the one part as on the other, most simply, onely like it selfe, and partner of non other, but in such wise beautifull, because they be partners of the beautie of it. This is the beautie unseparable from the high bountie, which with her voice calleth and draweth to her all things.

Juliet who said of herself:

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,  
My love as deep

is, in her love, a partaker of the transcendent "heavenly bountifulnesse." The contemporary interpretation of the macrocosm (the great cosmos) and the microcosm (the lesser cosmos), the latter having correspondence to the former in an eternal harmony, is often expressed in Shakespeare—no where more appealingly than in the familiar lines of *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*:

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubims;  
Such harmony is in immortal souls. . . .

Shakespeare's sonnets, it is needless to repeat, commonly stress the

necessity of reflecting the image and idea of beauty. "That thereby beauty's rose may never die."

## V

But Shakespeare is not a Platonist in the matter that concerns drama most—the problem of conflict. He has a very definite conception of personal responsibility and of the inevitable retribution for sin that are expressed in medieval theology. He differs most from the medieval outlook in the questioning attitude he preserves in regard to human destiny. In one sense medieval drama could scarcely be called tragic, for its central theme, the Crucifixion, though an act of agony, was, in affect, a proclamation of liberty and redemption for the individual soul. But in regard to free will and the possibility of the soul damning itself through its own choice, he follows medieval belief closely.

Shakespeare is also nearer the modern, and nearer the Greek, conception of tragedy, in that his supernatural referent is not categorized, but is left mysterious. In fact, Shakespeare deliberately achieves his most important effects of tragic irony by keeping the action purely on the natural plane set against the question mark of man's destiny. Though his tragedy is not stark and bleak in the Grecian sense, yet he has an instinctive understanding of the older conception of *hubris*, the immoderate pride that goes against the uses of nature and leads to *ate*, the fatal folly, the madness that besets those whom the gods would destroy.

Where Shakespeare's tragedy differs most from that of any other period is in his peculiar cosmic sense. He does not, with the Greeks, look upon a malignant destiny (even in *KING LEAR*) ironically twisting the life—course of the protagonist—victim. He does not have any Hegelian sense of the resolution of opposites in which a greater truth and value are born from the throes of conflict. Shakespeare looks upon the individual as primarily responsible for his own acts—acts that have absolute values and are not, as in some versions of the drama, mere symbols and indications of psychological states.

## VI

But his cosmic sence is unique in the *intensity* with which he views an act as having consequences far beyond its particular individuation. MACBETH probably serves as the most obvious illustration of the particular way in which Shakespeare's cosmic sense functions.

It is, first of all, a tragedy that runs parallel on both the natural and preternatural levels. It is easily understandable by anyone who does not care to accept what Mr. Walter Clyde Curry has called the "demonic metaphysics of Macbeth." We can disregard, if we choose, the evil forces that control "nature's germs" (the *rationes seminales* of St. Augustine), and the spirits invoked by Lady Macbeth to unsex her. The important thing is not that Shakespeare, here as in HAMLET, was steeped in demonology, not that

The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's  
In deepest consequence

but rather that to the individual sin a transcendent guilt is attached. It is an act that has cut off the protagonist from the transcendent "bountifulnesse". We may pity the protagonist, we may see what goodness in him was perverted. But the fact remains that Macbeth has cut himself off from the transcendent goodness, the "Communion of Saints" as conceived by the medieval mind.

The transcendent and tragic accent of the play hangs on a trivial detail—a symbol that looms as the symbol of sin that has transgressed the cosmos, and has invoked what Shakespeare so succinctly terms the "great doom's image." Though a trivial thing, yet it is a piercing symbol of the enormity behind it:

One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other,  
As if they had seen me with these hangman's hands.  
Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'  
When they did say 'God bless us!'

The act has had universal consequences—beyond time in the great cosmos:

Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!'  
Macbeth doth murder sleep.

The universal is destroyed for him. His hands have divorced

him from the "heavenly bountifulnesse"—Macbeth is left imprisoned in individuated guilt. The full horror is that *Macbeth shall sleep no more*. Macbeth's hand become the symbol of what has detached him from the harmony that is in immortal souls. His hands cannot be spiritually cleansed—not all great Neptune's flood can avail. Rather the blood of guilt will "the multitudinous seas incarnadine."

Herein are the cosmic sense and cosmic symbolism in Macbeth. We have the impression that tragedy is complete for Macbeth, that we could fade out the rest of the play, and leave Macbeth gazing at his irredeemable hands. For nothing more in a cosmic sense *does* happen to Macbeth; nothing more could happen to him. He commits further murders in a routine way, in a futile effort to make himself secure, but the full story of his soul is told. Later in the play is a return to this *motif* under different circumstances. Lady Macbeth says:

Here's the smell of the blood still; not all the  
perfumes of Arabia will sweeten this little hand.

Shakespeare has paralleled the key *motif* of Macbeth's looking upon hands that would incarnadine the sea in Lady Macbeth's concern over her spiritually uncleanable hands.

## VII

Shakespeare's work, though it has a universal significance that makes his thought of paramount importance today, has a symbolism and an expression that are largely the result of the contemporary milieu. Based largely upon the medieval conception of unrepented sin and its inevitable punishment, Shakespeare's values also comprise mercy, as in Portia's famous speech. But in tragedy mercy, pity, or compassion are veiled from us. We may hope, but we can obtain no mechanical assurance.

Shakespeare commonly conceives of a period of inertia and despair intervening between the sin and its ultimate consequences—a period wherein retribution fulfils its inexorable logic. Antony, whose offense against the cosmos is less severe than that of Mac-

beth, sees in destiny a deliberate cruelty personally directed against him:

(O misery on't) the wise gods seal our eyes,  
In our own filth drop our clear judgments, make us  
Adore our errors, laugh at's while we strut  
To our confusion. . . .

Macbeth, on the other hand, finds a momentary alleviation of his burden of guilt in a serene and complete futility:

. . . . . It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

Macbeth is tired, disgusted with the source of life itself—"I gin to be aweary of the sun." Antony, hearing the report of Cleopatra's supposed death, has a similar despair:

. . . . . The long day's task is done,  
And we must sleep.

The most powerful expression of the theme of retribution is to be found in *KING LEAR*. It is also the play which gives a crushing commentary to what the French philosopher, Jacques Maritain, has called in another connection, "anthropocentric humanism." This is a humanism which would make man the center of the universe, in which God merely acts as the external embodiment of his wishes, the standard-bearer to man's personal victory. *KING LEAR* shows the pitiless insignificance of man cut off from an organic supernaturalism and left at the mercy of a nature of which he is not undisputed master.

Shakespeare was instinctively and intuitively opposed to the ideal of anthropocentric humanism—the ideal of the complete man deriving his total being from life on a purely natural plane. Such an idea was monstrous to him. Iago and Edmund have followed nature—a world they think subject to an unmotivated and unmoral will. " 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus," they say, but these Machiavellians in their pride of limited intellect are the hopeless victims of the ironic vice that crushes them. "The gods are just. . . .

and of our pleasant vices  
Make instruments to plague us.

Egoistic, narrowly individuated, they lack the freedom in the

cosmic sense of the virtuous whom they despise. From them comes no compensating loveliness hinting that justice is not without mercy, and God not without compassion:

. . . Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman.

Shakespeare sees man and his acts against eternity. Man is a "bare, forked animal"—the quintessence of dust—"Imperial Caesar. . . might stop a hole to keep the wind away"—these are estimates of man viewed as an end in himself.

### VIII

The curious thing about Shakespeare's cosmic sense as it affects tragedy lies in his deliberate artistic irony. He deliberately blacks out the supernatural aspect of the picture, so that the victims of calamity may win the tragic pity. Pathos arises from a question awaiting an answer, an answer that in the world of time, of contingent particulars, is concealed from us.

KING LEAR, for example, is a tragedy in which the characters, though living on a purely natural plane, are yet for ever questing and questioning the supernatural. The heavens and the gods are subordinated to individual passions, made their instruments. Lear would make the heavens themselves the projection of his crisis, but the tragic facts stand universal and uncompromised by his invocations:

. . . . . O heavens,  
If you do love old men, if your sweet sway  
Allow obedience, if you yourselves are old,

Make it your cause.

Tragedy follows the logic of events, and presents a situation that cries out for a solution—a solution that is, nevertheless, impossible within the terms of our present experience. Consequently, the cosmos seems at the mercy of the contingent and the individuated. It is within this relationship of the transcendent world of the good to the individuated act that thwarts and oppresses it that Shakespeare introduces his deliberate irony. He underlines tragic pity by reminding us that things go on as usual in the immediate experience of the temporal world, however deep the tragedy of the individual soul. In KING LEAR, for ex-

ample, the fool is the symbol of the reality relentlessly hammering at the mind of Lear, reminding us that in the world of time the wheat and the chaff grow up together, that "here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools."

The gravediggers in *HAMLET* ply their trade; the clown wishes Cleopatra the "joy o' the worm" that he has just sold to her. Lear despairingly asks:

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,  
And thou no breath at all?

Here, as elsewhere, the supernatural aspect of Shakespeare's thought has been blacked out in tragedy, and is only indicated there by the breaking cry of humanity.

## IX

Shakespeare's last plays indicate a cosmic sense that has been tested by a full knowledge of evil, sin, and suffering.

E. K. Chambers found in the transition from the tragedies to the romances a "mental process such as the psychology of religion would call a conversion." The late G. K. Chesterton throws incidental light on a similar transition from a period in which the cosmic sense is absorbed in tragedy, to a period in which a spiritual reassurance has been achieved, commonly and humanly enough, but not within the terms of any logical dialectic. "No man," he says, "knows how much he is an optimist, even when he calls himself a pessimist, because he has not really measured the depths of his debt to whatever created him and enabled him to call himself anything. At the back of our brains, so to speak, there was a forgotten blaze or burst of astonishment at our own existence. The object of the artistic and spiritual life was to dig for this submerged sunrise of wonder; so that a man sitting in a chair might suddenly understand that he was actually alive, and be happy!"

Chesterton might have added that this was not an automatic experience; the submerged sunrise of wonder was only to be found at the end of the Slough of Despond. But it was this ultimate cosmic referent, this "submerged sunrise of wonder" that

enabled Shakespeare to endure "the purging fires of *MACBETH* and *OTHELLO*, to share the crucifixion and redemption of *Lear*, to win through to the haven of atonement and forgiveness in the enchanted island."

*by Keith Thomas*

### WINTER WISDOM

When his first winter bites the trembling fawn,  
And friendly shelter dropped around him lies,  
New wisdom from chill forests will have drawn  
Awareness fathoms deep within his eyes.

The mellow fields, the hillside soft with leaves  
Are the maternal landscape he outgrows,  
To learn whatever artifice deceives,  
When tracks and shadows gossip through the snows.

His nostrils try the wind, for tidings flared,  
His ears are high to trap the waves of sound;  
He will be wise as any who has shared  
In fear, when winter's course is turned around.

by James V. Logan

## ENGLAND'S PERIL AND WORDSWORTH

*Another year!—another deadly blow!  
Another mighty Empire overthrown!  
And We are left, or shall be left, alone;  
The last that dare to struggle with the Foe.*

THESE words were written, not by an English poet in the summer of 1940, but by William Wordsworth after the battle of Jena in 1806 when Napoleon, with all Europe at his feet, issued his Berlin decree for the blockade of England. Since 1793 Britain's struggle against Buonaparte had been a bitter one, and although she still maintained supremacy of the seas, she had been defeated on land, had lost her continental allies, and had been threatened with invasion as Napoleon's final blow against her.

History may not repeat itself, but Napoleon's hatred of England and his brilliant military successes have ceased in the past year to be to us merely ancient history. Nor are the social and moral ills of England in the early nineteenth century totally unlike those of the industrialized democracies of the present. He who runs may read, and wonder not a little at the parallels between our times and those.

To understand what the Napoleonic wars meant to England we can go to no better source than to her foremost poet of the period, Wordsworth. From 1801 to 1816 he wrote a series of poems, mostly sonnets, on the political scene, later grouping them together under the title "Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty." They show his acute consciousness of the dangers and distresses of those years, and a realistic grasp of the political policies of Europe that might surprise those readers who know Wordsworth only as the dreamer of Dove Cottage, wandering in a bed of daffodils, lonely as a cloud. We read these poems today with fresh interest.

Wordsworth's sympathies were with France at the beginning

of the Revolution, and he was strong in his denunciation of England when she provoked the new French nation to war in 1793. By 1802, however, he had grown to detest Napoleon and his military conquests. Almost his earliest sonnet is a sharp rebuke to a nation that thoughtlessly delivers itself into the hands of a popular leader.

Is it a reed that's shaken by the wind,  
Or what is it that ye go forth to see?  
Lords, lawyers, statesmen, squires of low degree,  
Men known, and men unknown, sick, lame, and blind,  
Post forward all, like creatures of one kind,  
With first-fruit offerings crowd to bend the knee  
In France, before the new-born Majesty.  
'Tis ever thus. Ye men of prostrate mind,  
A seemly reverence may be paid to power;  
But that's a loyal virtue, never sown  
In haste, nor springing with a transient shower:  
When truth, when sense, when liberty were flown,  
What hardship had it been to wait an hour?  
Shame on you, feeble heads, to slavery prone!

Lest anyone admire Napoleon because he was "a man of action," Wordsworth points out the unfitness of a military conqueror to govern a people whose civilization springs not from an army camp, but from domestic life, and from the simple, honest intercourse of neighbor with neighbor.

I grieved for Buonaparte, with a vain  
And an unthinking grief! The tenderest mood  
Of that man's mind—what can it be? what food  
Fed his first hopes? what knowledge could *he* gain?  
'Tis not in battles that from youth we train  
The governor who must be wise and good,  
And temper with the sternness of the brain  
Thoughts motherly, and meek as womanhood.  
Wisdom doth live with children round her knees:  
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk  
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk  
Of the mind's business: these are the degrees  
By which true sway doth mount; this is the stalk  
True power doth grow on; and her rights are these.

These two poems sharply point the hated characteristics of the dictator and the unfortunate state of the people who have accepted his yoke.

In 1802 the peace of Amiens was declared, a truce that nobody expected to last. Its duration was less than fourteen months, only long enough to give Napoleon a breathing-time before launching

his strongest and fiercest attacks against England. It gave Wordsworth the opportunity to pay a short visit to Calais. Two things were made clear to him during his short sojourn on French soil: that England was the sole surviving hope of freedom in Europe, and that her fiercest struggle against Napoleon was ahead. It was a depressing and sinister experience, that August holiday of 1802.

Here is his description of the celebration at Calais of Napoleon's birthday, August 15, 1802.

Festivals have I seen that were not names:  
This is young Buonaparte's natal day,  
And his is henceforth an established sway—  
Consul for life. With worship France proclaims  
Her approbation, and with pomps and games.  
Heaven grant that other cities may be gay!  
Calais is not: and I have bent my way  
To the sea-coast, noting that each man frames  
His business as he likes. Far other show  
My youth here witnessed, in a prouder time;  
The senselessness of joy was then sublime!  
Happy is he, who, caring not for Pope,  
Consul, or King, can sound himself to know  
The destiny of Man, and live in hope.

Napoleon's conquest of Sweden and his destruction of what remained of the Venetian republic were to the poet ominous signs of the universal slavery following Buonaparte's madness for conquest. He pays tribute to the conquered Swedes in these words:

How they with dignity may stand; or fall,  
If fall they must . . .

His gloom over the fate of Venice is voiced in these lines:

Men are we, and must grieve when even the shade  
Of that which once was great is passed away.

Both of these statements might have come from an Englishman today, in sympathy for Norway and Greece!

The dictators today are not the first who have been guilty of racial persecution, as we see from the following note that Wordsworth appended to one of his poems. "Among the capricious acts of tyranny that disgraced those times, was the chasing of all Negroes from France by a decree of the government: we had a fellow-passenger who was one of the expelled." He de-

scribes the unhappy Negro, dressed in spotless white, dazed and mute.

Yet still her eyes retained their tropic fire,  
That, burning independent of the mind,  
Joined with the lustre of her rich attire  
To mock the outcast—O ye Heavens, be kind!  
And feel, thou Earth, for this afflicted race!

Nor is Hitler the first to pose as benefactor to a conquered nation. Napoleon seems to have done the same toward Spain. Wordsworth, in one of his noblest poems, says that a brave people can, if they must, accept their defeat, but it is a bitter command to regard their conqueror as a dispenser of benefits.

We can endure that he should waste our lands,  
Despoil our temples, and by sword and flame  
Return us to the dust from which we came;  
Such food a tyrant's appetite demands;  
And we can brook the thought that by his hands  
Spain may be overpowered, and he possess,  
For his delight, a solemn wilderness  
Where all the brave lie dead. But, when of bands  
Which he will break for us he dares to speak,  
Of benefits, and of a future day  
When our enlightened minds shall bless his sway;  
Then the strained heart of fortitude proves weak;  
Our groans, our blushes, our pale cheeks declare  
That he has power to inflict what we lack strength to bear.

Surrounded by the abject attitude of the French and by the spreading political oppression throughout Europe, and conscious of Napoleon's unslaked hatred of England as the one country that stood in his way of world dominion, Wordsworth turned his eyes across the Channel to the blurred shore of his beloved land, with misgivings in his heart, but with a faith in England as the last remaining hope of Europe. This is the occasion of one of the great patriotic poems of the language.

Fair Star of evening, Splendour of the west,  
Star of my Country!—on the horizon's brink  
Thou hangest, stooping, as might seem, to sink  
On England's bosom; yet well pleased to rest,  
Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest  
Conspicuous to the Nations. Thou, I think,  
Should'st be my Country's emblem; and should'st wink  
Bright Star! with laughter on her banners, drest  
In thy fresh beauty. There! that dusky spot  
Beneath thee, that is England; there she lies.  
Blessings be on you both! one hope, one lot,  
One life, one glory!—I, with many a fear  
For my dear Country, many heartfelt sighs,  
Among men who do not love her, linger here.

## II

The two following poems were written as soon as the poet had set foot again on his native soil. The first is simply exquisite delight over the sights and sounds of home. What a contrast was the clean, quiet countryside of Dover to the grim spectacle of Calais!

Here, on our native soil, we breathe once more.  
The cock that crows, the smoke that curls, that sound  
Of bells;—those boys who in yon meadow-ground  
In white-sleeved shirts are playing; and the roar  
Of the waves breaking on the chalky shore;—  
All, all are English. Oft have I looked round  
With joy in Kent's green vales; but never found  
Myself so satisfied in heart before.  
Europe is yet in bounds; but let that pass,  
Thought for another moment. Thou art free,  
My Country! and 'tis joy enough and pride  
For one hour's perfect bliss, to tread the grass  
Of England once again, and hear and see,  
With such a dear companion at my side.

The second, also written near Dover, is less joyous, more subdued by grave concern for England, "the coast of France how near!"

Inland within a hollow vale, I stood;  
And saw, while sea was calm and air was clear,  
The coast of France—the coast of France how near!  
Drawn almost into frightful neighbourhood.  
I shrunk; for verily the barrier flood  
Was like a lake, or river bright and fair,  
A span of waters; yet what power is there!  
What mightiness for evil and for good!  
Even so doth God protect us if we be  
Virtuous and wise. Winds blow, and waters roll,  
Strength to the brave, and Power, and Deity;  
Yet in themselves are nothing! One decree  
Spake laws to *them*, and said that by the soul  
Only, the nations shall be great and free.

Up to this point we have seen poetry that expresses Wordsworth's emotional response to the dangers of his day. A body of patriotic verse that is worthy of the name must include something more than a love of one's country and a hatred of a conquering despot. It must probe deeper than this; it must seek to offer something of critical value as a positive remedy to the weaknesses and mistakes of society. Wordsworth, with his strong social and humanitarian sympathies, did not shrink from revealing

the serious shortcomings which he saw about him in English society. Profoundly spiritual and moral as he was, he could not fail to speak out boldly against the commercial materialism that had sapped the strength of his beloved England. This is no easy nor safe thing to do in times of war. The "Fair Star of Evening" poem quoted above would be welcome to any "patriotic" group, but some of the poems that follow might well be denounced as "defeatist." But their rebuke was offered as a corrective, and to us today they throw light on the moral and spiritual condition of the England that waged this life-and-death struggle against Napoleon.

Wordsworth had a clear perception of the internal forces that were weakening England in her struggle against her foe, and he warned her that she must wean her heart from "its emasculating food." He saw that his country was corrupted by greed, vulgarianism, and commercialism. She cared less for liberty than she did for money and display. He goes so far as to say that but for her vicious policies in Greece, Egypt, India, and Africa, there might have been a better hope for Europe. Her mortal enemy, however, is worse than she.

Therefore the wise pray for thee, though the freight  
Of thy offenses be a heavy weight:  
Oh grief that earth's best hopes all rest with thee!

One may pause here to draw a parallel. We hear today much criticism of the democracies whose skirts are surely not spotless in this tragic world conflict. All are guilty of selfish international policies. There are many in the position of Wordsworth, men who are critical of these tendencies, but recognize as did Wordsworth that the evils of a military dictatorship are far worse.

Wordsworth goes yet deeper into the problem. What are the causes back of the selfish monopoly of wealth and power characteristic of the international scene? He sees it to be the moral and spiritual death creeping over the world as the Industrial Revolution began to be felt in nineteenth-century England, replacing the finer humanistic values with a crass material standard. In the following poem, written shortly after his return from France, he gives a stinging indictment of the shallow greed that he saw about him.

O Friend! I know not which way I must look  
 For comfort, being, as I am, oppress'd,  
 To think that now our life is only drest  
 For show; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,  
 Or groom!—We must run glittering like a brook  
 In the open sunshine, or we are unblest:  
 The wealthiest man among us is the best:  
 No grandeur now in nature or in book  
 Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,  
 This is idolatry; and these we adore:  
 Plain living and high thinking are no more:  
 The homely beauty of the good old cause  
 Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,  
 And pure religion breathing household laws.

Believing that "virtue and the faculties within are vital," Wordsworth goes so far as to tell his countrymen that there is a bondage worse than imprisonment by a tyrant; it is the moral bondage of those who "must wear their fetters in their souls." In a purely materialistic society there is a corruption which is a far deadlier enemy than Napoleon and his armies. All are involved in this creeping death.

For who could be,  
 Who, even the best, in such condition, free  
 From self-reproach, reproach that he must share  
 With human-nature? Never be it ours  
 To see the sun how brightly it will shine,  
 And know that noble feelings, manly powers,  
 Instead of gathering strength, must droop and pine;  
 And earth with all her pleasant fruits and flowers  
 Fade, and participate in man's decline.

Wordsworth's denunciation of the moral degeneracy of the day reaches its most vigorous expression in perhaps his best known sonnet, the one addressed to Milton. He exclaims that England has need of great men like Milton, who scorned the bribes of cupidity and combined in one spiritual and political leadership. Softened by luxury and destitute of great leaders, England's ancient freedom was endangered not only by the armies of Napoleon from without, but by a "fifth column" of plutocratic degeneracy from within.

Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:  
 England hath need of thee: she is a fen  
 Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,  
 Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,  
 Have forfeited their ancient English dower  
 Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;  
 Oh! raise us up, return to us again;

And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.  
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:  
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:  
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,  
So didst thou travel on life's common way,  
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart  
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

## III

Wordsworth wrote several poems on the eve of Napoleon's expected invasion of England which are of peculiar interest today when Britain is again threatened. When hostilities were reopened in 1803, Buonaparte determined to end the war quickly by pouring an army of overwhelming force into England. Collecting his troops along the north coast of France, he filled every harbor from Antwerp to Le Havre with flat-bottom boats to transport his vast army to England. Making Boulogne his headquarters until a favorable time to strike, he sought to harass and distract the English by stirring up a rebellion in Ireland. The people lived in daily dread of the invasion and bloody reprisals. All over the country civilians formed local militia to defend themselves, and Wordsworth himself drilled in a company of civilian guards.

England's state of mind can well be imagined from the following sonnet which Wordsworth addressed to the men of Kent. Kent stood perilously close to the French channel ports and the waiting enemy.

Vanguard of Liberty, ye men of Kent,  
Ye children of a soil that doth advance  
Her haughty brow against the coast of France,  
Now is the time to prove your hardiment!  
To France be words of invitation sent!  
They from their fields can see the countenance  
Of your fierce war, may ken the glittering lance  
And hear you shouting forth your brave intent.  
Left single, in bold parley, ye, of yore,  
Did from the Norman win a gallant wreath;  
Confirmed the charters that were yours before;—  
No parleying now. In Britain is one breath;  
We all are with you now from shore to shore:—  
Ye men of Kent, 'tis victory or death!

In the poem entitled "Lines on the Expected Invasion" he urges all factions to unite in the face of this grim crisis.

Come ye—whate'er your creed—O waken all,  
 Whate'er your temper, at your Country's call;  
 Resolving (this a free-born nation can)  
 To have one soul, and perish to a man,  
 Or save this honored land from every lord  
 But British reason and the British sword.

It must be admitted Wordsworth reaches momentarily a condition of jingoism in a poem of anticipated victory.

Shout, for a mighty victory is won!  
 On British ground the invaders are laid low;  
 The breath of heaven has drifted them like snow  
 And left them lying in the silent sun,  
 Never to rise again!—the work is done.

Less vainglorious is the poem in which he places his faith in the spirit of the people to defend their land, though their army may be small.

What if our numbers barely could defy  
 The arithmetic of babes, must foreign hordes,  
 Slaves, vile as ever were befooled by words,  
 Striking through English breasts the anarchy  
 Of terror, bear us to the ground, and tie  
 Our hands behind our backs with felon cords?  
 Yields every thing to discipline of swords?  
 Is man as good as man, none low, none high?—  
 Nor discipline nor valor can withstand  
 The shock, nor quell the inevitable rout,  
 When in some great extremity breaks out  
 A people, on their own beloved land  
 Risen, like one man, to combat in the sight  
 Of a just God for liberty and right.

Interesting as these "war poems" may be, of more permanent value are Wordsworth's views on the fundamental nature of national happiness, and his steady faith in liberty and the ultimate triumph of freedom and decency over tyranny and aggression. By 1809 Wordsworth's patriotic sentiments had broadened out into a well thought-out policy explained at length in his prose pamphlet entitled "Tract on the Convention of Cintra." In 1808 Spain had revolted, driven Napoleon's brother from Madrid, and England again had an ally on the continent. She inflicted a severe defeat on the French at the battle of Vimiero, in what was called the Peninsula War, but in the Convention of Cintra England made a somewhat stupid treaty with the French which was not altogether fair to her Spanish ally.

Indignant over this, Wordsworth was roused to write his tract,

and while the issue itself is dead and forgotten, the pamphlet retains its interest in that it eloquently advocates liberty and national independence for every European state.

His characterization of a great statesman is interesting, and the picture he gives is hardly that of Napoleon or the dictator. In contradistinction to the man commanding a great military force Wordsworth says:

"we may confidently affirm that nothing but a knowledge of human nature directing the operations of our government, can give it a right to an intimate association with a cause which is that of human nature." Progress, he says, "in civilization, in true refinement, in science, in religion, in morals, and in all the real wealth of humanity, might indeed be quicker, and might correspond more happily with the wishes of the benevolent,—if Governors understood the rudiments of nature as studied in the walks of common life."

If we put beside this a quotation from the poem "The Happy Warrior" we see that even the statesman-soldier must share the simple loves and joys of the common man.

He who, though thus endued as with a sense  
And faculty for storm and turbulence,  
Is yet a Soul whose master-bias leans  
To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes;  
Sweet images! which, wheresoe'er he be,  
Are at his heart; and such fidelity  
It is his darling passion to approve;  
More brave for this, that he hath much to love;—

But what of a people who are struggling against the foe to their freedom? He sees in the Spaniards a moral unanimity which is their strength. He says it will fare ill with foreign tyrants "when a people, which has lived long, feels that it has a country to love; and where the heart of that people is sound."

The age has been too much occupied by material progress, "a neater and more fertile garden; a greener field; implements and utensils more apt; a dwelling more commodious and better furnished." The mind of man may still remain a slave. Wordsworth emphasizes those aspects of life which must be cultivated if men are to be free.

Not by bread alone is the life of Man sustained; not by raiment alone is he warmed;—but by the genial and vernal

inmate of the breast, which at once pushes forth and cherishes; by self-support and self-sufficing endeavours; by anticipations, apprehensions and active remembrance; by elasticity under insult, and firm resistance to injury; by joy, and by love; by pride which his imagination gathers in from afar; by patience, because life wants not promises; by admiration; by gratitude which—debasing him not when his fellow-being is its object—habitually expands itself, for his elevation, in complacency towards his Creator.

Now, to the existence of these blessings, national independence is indispensable.

He concludes confidently that "the good in human nature is stronger than the evil."

Thus, in times hardly less discouraging than ours, Wordsworth courageously maintained the principles of true democracy. It seemed to him impossible that the great stream of British freedom, which "from dark antiquity hath flowed"—even though diverted at times—should be lost forever "in bogs and sands."

In our halls is hung  
Armory of the invincible of old:  
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue  
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold  
Which Milton held.—In every thing we are sprung  
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

Throughout this perilous period Wordsworth never lost faith in the essential goodness of mankind, and the idomitable nature of man's mind. He remembers the unfortunate Toussaint L'Ouverture, governor of San Domingo and a former African slave, who defied Napoleon's edict to re-establish slavery on that island. He was imprisoned and put to death, but though crushed by a despot, all nature is his ally, says Wordsworth.

Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,  
Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind  
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;  
There's not a breathing of the common wind  
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;  
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,  
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

by Kenneth Neill Cameron

## THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF SHELLEY

IT is a lamentable, but indubitable, fact, that, in spite of the efforts of a number of socially-minded scholars from H. Buxton Forman to Newman Ivey White, the prevalent view of Shelley is still that of a mystic visionary,—the “ineffectual angel” of Matthew Arnold, the winsome “child” of Francis Thompson, the impulsive Ariel of Andre Maurois. If any doubt that this is so, let him but consult those stolid barometers of average academic opinion, the textbooks and anthologies. The anthologies he will find interminably reprinting the same minor lyrics—“To A Skylark,” “To Night,” “When the lamp is shattered” etc., etc.,—lyrics which are entirely unrepresentative of the major channels of Shelley’s philosophy. The textbooks he will find re-echoing (with unimportant and pedestrian variations) the catch-phrases of Arnold, Thompson, Hogg, Clutton Brock and their ilk.

Upon what postulates, we may inquire, is this view based? Only one of its proponents, so far as I can find, has been sufficiently rash to advance any, namely George Santayana, who, in *WINDS OF DOCTRINE*, has the following to offer:

Shelley was one of those spokesmen of the *a priori*, one of those nurslings of the womb, like a bee or a butterfly; a dogmatic, inspired, perfect and incorrigible creature. . . . Being a finished child of nature, not a joint product, like most of us, of nature, history and society, he abounded miraculously in his own clear sense but was obtuse to the droll, miscellaneous lessons of fortune. The cannonade of hard, inexplicable facts that knocks into most of us what little wisdom we have, left Shelley dazed and sore, perhaps, but uninstructed. When the storm was over he began chirping again his own natural note. If the world continued to confine and oppress him, he hated the world, and gasped for freedom. Being incapable of understanding reality, he revelled in creating world after world in idea.

The view of the angelic school, then, rests upon two postulates:

Shelley was not, like other human beings, a product of a social environment but a mystic outgrowth of nature, "like a bee or a butterfly"; Shelley's philosophy is, likewise, not the product of a social environment—or, apparently, of an intellectual one either—but is of the pure substance of his own mind, a dream fantasy, "creating world after world in idea".

It is in the hope of driving one more nail into the coffin of this apparently unburi-able view that I undertake the present brief outline of Shelley's social philosophy, a philosophy which both Shelley and Mary looked upon as expressing the essence of his message to mankind.

Shelley, fortunately, has left us a picture of this philosophy not in his poetry alone, but also—as has been insufficiently noted—in his prose, where it is presented with an expository directness which is inevitably lacking in the more symbolic medium of poetry. The key to the understanding of the poetry, in fact, is to be found in the prose.

The main inspirational force in Shelley's work, as many critics have recognized, though they have not always expressed it in quite these terms, is his theory of historical evolution. The essence of this theory, as given in the first chapter of *A PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW OF REFORM* and other works, is that history is essentially a struggle between two sets of forces, the forces of liberty and the forces of despotism. Sometimes the despotic forces were in the ascendent—as in ancient Rome or the England of Charles I; sometimes the forces of liberty—as in Athens or the medieval Italian states or the England of Cromwell. In recent times two events had raised the power of the forces of liberty to tidal wave proportions,—the American Revolutionary War and the French Revolution.

The system of government in the United States of America—wrote Shelley (in 1819)—is the first practical illustration of the new philosophy. Sufficiently remote, it will be confessed, from the accuracy of ideal excellence, is that representative system which will soon cover the extent of that vast Continent. But it is scarcely less remote from the insolent and contaminating tyrannies under which, with some limitations of these terms as regards England, Europe groaned at the period of the successful rebellion of America. America

holds forth the victorious example of an immensely populous, and as far as the external arts of life are concerned, a highly civilized community administered according to republican forms. . . . The just and successful Revolt of America corresponded with a state of public opinion in Europe of which it was the first result. The French Revolution was the second.

These two advances of the forces of liberty, Shelley believed, were of such a magnitude as to make any future repression of them but temporary. Specifically applied to the contemporary European scene, this meant that the extensive counter-revolutionary network of Metternich, Castlereagh and the Quadruple Alliance would eventually be torn asunder. Shelley—running against the tide of pessimism then so common among liberal thinkers—believed that he could perceive signs of such an awakening in Europe, especially in the revolutionary events in Spain, Naples and Greece (1820 and 1821). As he wrote in 1821, the year before his death—at a time when, according to some critics, he had ceased to be a revolutionary and had become a mystic—

This is the age of the war of the oppressed against the oppressors, and every one of those ringleaders of the privileged gangs of murderers and swindlers, called Sovereigns, look to each other for aid against the common enemy and suspend their mutual jealousies in the presence of a mightier fear. Of this holy alliance all the despots of the earth are virtual members. But a new race has arisen throughout Europe, nursed in the abhorrence of the opinions which are its chains, and she will continue to produce fresh generations to accomplish that destiny which tyrants foresee and dread.

The Spanish Peninsula is already free. France is tranquil in the enjoyment of a partial exemption from the abuses which its unnatural and feeble government are vainly attempting to revive. The seed of blood and misery has been sown in Italy, and a more vigorous race is arising to go forth to the harvest. The world waits only the news of a revolution in Germany to see the tyrants who have pinnacled themselves on its supineness precipitated into the ruin from which they shall never arise. Well do these destroyers of mankind know their enemy, when they impute the insurrection in Greece to the same spirit before which they tremble throughout the rest of Europe, and that enemy well knows the power and cunning of its opponents, and watches for the moment of their approaching weakness and inevitable division to wrest the bloody sceptres from their grasp.

It is in this theory of historical development—from ancient Greece to his own times and beyond—that we have the basis for what is usually called Shelley's "optimism", that chirping after the storm of which Professor Santayana speaks. That it was not at all, however, a purely emotional, subjective optimism but was based on a study of historical movements is shown by the fact that a little more than a quarter of a century after Shelley uttered these words, the aristocratic-militaristic Europe of Metternich had been torn to shreds under the impetus of those two celebrated years of revolutions, 1830 and 1848, and the more democratic states, which Shelley anticipated, were either established, or had, at least, had their foundations laid.

Shelley did not believe that the historical forces unloosed by the American and French revolutions would stop with the establishment of democratic republics, but that they would continue beyond this form of state into an equalitarian society, a society, that is to say, in which every person would possess an equal amount of private property. This he looked upon as a matter for the rather remote future, and urged his contemporaries to concentrate their attention upon the problems of the present.

Equality in possessions must be the last result of the utmost refinements of civilization; it is one of the conditions of that system of society, toward which with whatever hope of ultimate success, it is our duty to tend. We may and ought to advert to it as to the elementary principle, as to the goal unattainable, perhaps by us, but which, as it were, we revive in our posterity to pursue. We derive tranquillity and courage and grandeur of soul from contemplating an object which is, because we will it, and must be if succeeding generations of the enlightened sincerely and earnestly seek it. . . . But our present business is with the difficult and unbending realities of actual life, and when we have drawn inspiration from the great object of our hopes it becomes us with patience and resolution to apply ourselves to accommodating our theories to immediate practice.

Nor did Shelley himself fail to "accommodate his theories to immediate practice." In regard to the continent of Europe he felt that the existing despotic governments could be overthrown only by revolution, and his letters and work show a constant attention to the development of such movements—in Spain, in

Naples, in Paris, in Greece, as well as in Mexico, South America and Ireland (which he had visited as a youth in advocacy of the repeal of the union with England and the establishment of Catholic Emancipation). In regard to England he hoped that a democratic state could be achieved by peaceful means and wrote three political tracts in support of the movement for the reform of parliament. For a time he supported that group known as the moderate reformers, who demanded the vote only for those who paid property taxes, in preference to the radical reformers, who demanded the vote for all adult males. His reason for doing so was not that he accepted limited suffrage as a final objective, but that he believed complete suffrage could best be obtained in two stages; and this, we might note, was how it finally did happen: limited suffrage was established in 1832 and extended in 1867 and 1885, until complete male suffrage was achieved.

Such, then, in brief, is the essence of Shelley's social philosophy as expressed in his prose works. It seems hardly the kind of philosophy that one would suck from nature "like a bee or a butterfly." The belief that the progressive people would overthrow the aristocratic, dicatorial states by revolution on the continent and by reform in England was no "creating world after world in idea". These views were the result of an analysis of the contemporary international situation, the product of a mind shaped by the forces of the French Revolution and the English reform movement. They were views, moreover, shared in large part by such advanced political thinkers as Holbach, Condorcet, Volney, Paine, Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Leigh Hunt, William Cobbett, Sir Francis Burdett and Jeremy Bentham. Were all these thinkers, too, we might legitimately inquire, obsessed by subjective dream fantasies, "ineffectual angels"?

Nor can it be claimed that Shelley had one social philosophy for his prose and another for his poetry. I have discussed the prose first simply as a matter of convenience, but everything brought out in relation to the one applies also to the other. Shelley's analysis of the contemporary situation in England and its reform movement will be found in "The Mask of Anarchy" and "Swellfoot The Tyrant"; his views on the revolutionary movement on the continent, in the "Ode Written in October, 1819", the

"Ode to Liberty"—on the Spanish revolution of 1820—the "Ode to Naples"—on the war of the Kingdom of Naples against Austrian domination—and "Hellas"—on the Greek struggle for liberation from the Turkish empire; his interpretation of the rise and fall of the French Revolution and the emergence of the tyranny of the Quadruple Alliance, in "The Revolt of Islam"; his general theory of historical evolution, in "Queen Mab" and "Prometheus Unbound".

To glance briefly at one of Shelley's poems on affairs in England: the central thought of "The Mask of Anarchy" is that if the ruling aristocratic class continued its policy of repression (as at "Peterloo") social anarchy would result, and such a disaster could be prevented only if the people of England would rally around the central issues of the reform movement for a peaceful transference of power. This, too, is the main thought of chapters two and three of *A PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW OF REFORM*; and like *A PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW OF REFORM* the poem ends on a sterner note:

Rise like lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number—  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you—  
Ye are many—they are few.

The most encouraging and significant event on the continent, Shelley felt, was the beginning, in 1821, of the revolutionary war of the Greek people, significant because it represented the first major cracking of the Metternich system, and hence a culminating point in the historical evolution of the forces of liberty. It is in this perspective that he treats the Greek revolution in "Hellas" putting into flaming lyrical verse the same concept of historical development we have already noted in his prose.

In the great morning of the world,  
The Spirit of God with might unfurled  
The flag of Freedom over Chaos,  
And all its banded anarchs fled,  
Like vultures frightened from Imaus,  
Before an earthquake's tread,—  
So from Time's tempestuous dawn  
Freedom's splendour burst and shone:—  
Thermopylae and Marathon  
Caught like mountains beacon-lighted,  
The springing Fire.—The winged glory  
On Philippi half-alighted

Liked an eagle on a promontory.  
 Its unwearied wings could fan  
 The quenchless ashes of Milan.<sup>1</sup>  
 From age to age, from man to man,  
 It lived, and lit from land to land  
 Florence, Albion,<sup>2</sup> Switzerland.

Then night<sup>3</sup> fell; and, as from night,  
 Reassuming fiery flight,  
 From the West swift Freedom came,<sup>4</sup>  
 Against the course of Heaven and doom,  
 A second sun arrayed in flame,  
 To burn, to kindle, to illumine.  
 From far Atlantis, its young beams  
 Chased the shadows and the dreams.  
 France, with all her sanguine streams,  
 Hid, but quenched it not; again  
 Through clouds its shafts of glory rain  
 From utmost Germany to Spain.<sup>5</sup>  
 As an eagle fed with morning  
 Scorns the embattled tempest's warning,  
 When she seeks her aerie hanging  
 In the mountain-cedar's hair,  
 And her brood expect the clanging  
 Of her wings through the wild air,  
 Sick with famine;—Freedom so  
 To what of Greece remaineth now  
 Returns; her hoary ruins glow  
 Like Orient mountains lost in day;  
 Beneath the safety of her wings  
 Her renovated nurslings prey  
 And in the naked lightnings  
 Of truth they purge their dazzled eyes.  
 Let Freedom leave—where'er she flies,  
 A Desert or a Paradise:  
 Let the beautiful and the brave  
 Share her glory or a grave.

It is clear that Shelley is not, as his critics usually assume, treating the Greek revolution, as an isolated event but in terms of an integrated philosophy of historical evolution.

In "The Revolt of Islam" Shelley depicts what he calls a *beau ideal* of the French Revolution and its aftermath, basing his picture upon Volney, Mary Wollstonecraft and other historians of the revolution. He gives a striking picture of the people under tyrannical oppression, grave and hoary demagogues sent among them to prove that "among mankind/The many to the few be-

<sup>1</sup>Italian city states.

<sup>2</sup>Cromwell.

<sup>3</sup>The Restoration.

<sup>4</sup>The American Revolution.

<sup>5</sup>Spanish Revolution, January, 1820.

long, / By heaven and nature and necessity." He traces the victorious rise of the (French) people and their inspired establishment of a new order based upon wisdom, love and equality, as a result of which the other nations of Europe will likewise attain freedom, for "Thoughts have gone forth whose powers can sleep no more!" Then comes the treacherous attack of the king and his fellow rulers, followed by bloody warfare—the Napoleonic wars—and ended by a peace more horrible than the war itself:

Peace in the desert fields and villages,  
Between the gluttoned beasts and mangled dead!  
Peace in the silent streets.

In the midst of these horrors the rulers call a meeting (parallel to the Congress of Vienna):

Ye Princes of the Earth, ye sit aghast  
Amid the ruin which yourselves have made,  
Yes, Desolation heard your trumpet's blast  
And sprang from sleep!—dark Terror has obeyed  
Your bidding. . . .

It is a terrible and powerful picture, but no more terrible than the reality of a Europe bloody from a quarter century of wars and revolutions, which inspired it.

In "Prometheus Unbound" Shelley takes a still broader canvas, depicting the vast movement of historical evolution from a period immediately before the outbreak of the French Revolution into the immediate future of the overthrow of the despotic state, and the remoter future, of the equalitarian society. The struggle of Prometheus is the struggle of the leader of humanity—specifically the peoples of post-war Europe—against the despotic state (Jupiter)—specifically the rule of the Quadruple Alliance. In this struggle humanity is assisted by the forces of historical evolution (Demogorgon) and by the strength of human love and comradeship (Asia). Aided by these forces mankind overthrows the despotic state and advances into the new order.

Because of the very vastness of the subject, Shelley does not use the detailed method he employs in "The Revolt of Islam" but treats it in more general terms, a technique which has proved misleading to a number of critics, for they have viewed what are really generalizations of actual historical movements as pure ab-

stractions. A detailed study of the poem and its symbolism reveals the same theories and interpretations that we have already noted in the other poems and the prose. To give an example: the Furies represent, in their historical-political significance, the same thing that the armies of the despots do in "The Revolt of Islam", namely the allied armies of the Napoleonic Wars. The Furies, we remember, come "From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the earth, / Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth"; the armies in "The Revolt of Islam:"

From every nations of the earth they came,  
The multitude of heartless moving things,  
Whom slaves call men; obediently they came.

These armies, in "The Revolt of Islam," are joined by the forces of other tyrants—a reference, mainly, to the English declaration of war on France—"Myriads had come—millions were on their way"; of the Furies, too, one group comes first and calls to its fellows:

We are steaming up from Hell's wide gate  
And we burthen the blast of the atmosphere,  
But vainly we toil till ye come here.

To give a second example: When, in A PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW OF REFORM, Shelley writes that in spite of the defeat of the revolution, France will rise again—"But the military project of the great tyrant [Napoleon] having failed, and there being no attempt—and, if there were any attempt, there being not the remotest possibility of reestablishing the enormous system of tyranny abolished by the Revolution, France, is as it were, regenerated"—we have the same basic conception as in the song of the spirits to Prometheus at the conclusion of the first act when they indicate to him that the forces of liberty will again triumph in Europe following the crushing of the French Revolution, a message which Shelley expresses also in the "Ode To The West Wind":

O thou,  
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed  
  
The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
With living hues and odour plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which are moving everywhere;  
Destroyer and Preserver; hear, oh, hear!

The "winged seeds" are the dormant forces of democratic progress; the "wild spirit", the "destroyer and preserver", the "West Wind" is the mighty tide of historical evolution gathering to sweep away the old order of aristocratic despotism.

*by Sophronia Stekol*

### SYCAMORE CREEK

Bluebells flood across the land,  
The meadow land of Tennessee—  
Waves of wildflowers wash the strand  
Where ocean used to be.

Fossils sleep in limestone rocks  
Where seaweed, fish and coral were;  
Now trillium and purple phlox  
Drown the country, everywhere.

Sea foam was, where violets  
Purple like a darkening main;  
Earth remembers, man forgets—  
The sea will come again.

Some time, the old Pacific floor  
Will heave and shake the water free  
And here will be, as once before,  
A mighty ocean—Tennessee.

*by Frances W. Knickerbocker*

## VACATIONLAND: 1942

AS Route 1 strides on its new toll bridge across the Piscataqua River from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, into Kittery, one of Maine's "oldest towns," the tourist camps and eating places thicken along the highway. Every summer we have seen more of them, elbowing each other among the pine groves and the buttercup fields: Rainbow Cabins, Ramblers' Rest, The Sea Urchin, Ye Old Lobster Trappe, luring the weary wayfarer with their fresh white paint and gay shutters, their geranium window-boxes and trellised porches. Even last year, though the first faint rumblings of Ickes were heard in the land, cars from forty states still swarmed the roads. "If all the tourists in Maine were laid end to end," we wondered, "could they fill all these cabins, buy all these antique-shop bottles and Dutch-girl weathervanes, consume all these broiled live lobsters and fried clams?"

But now: the "Vacationland" of the Maine license plates, the great new rubber-tired, motor-driven tourist industry that had sprung up to replace the vanishing shipyards and sawmills, has become a casualty of war. As you drive along Route 1, you can, at forty miles an hour, count the "Closed" signs on the desolate, shuttered cabins and dining-halls. The remnant, bravely "Open for Business," show but one or two cars huddled beside them. One incorrigible optimist had stuck "For Rent" above his lobster signboard. Even the Burma-Shave signs, those gay ditties formerly splashed along the swift miles, are rationed now, shrunk to terse slogans: "Have you Sold-your Soldier on Burma-Shave?" "Don't tell it to the Marines—They know."

You enter another world when you drive through factory towns like Biddeford and Saco, so silent in the depression years, now with their cotton mills and shoe factories humming, their cluttered main streets crowded. And the lovely old shipbuilding towns,

haunted by lonely heroines and sea-captains' wives who gazed (at least they do in the Maine novels) from the cupolas of their white, elm-shaded houses across Penobscot and Sheepscot Bays,—are rousing now from their long sleep. At Wiscasset the old four-masted schooner rots at its wharf, but beside it smokes a new war plant. The road into Bath is jammed for miles with the cars of workers coming and going for the eight-hour shifts, and the great shipyards vibrate with riveting as the slate-blue hulls of destroyers are sped to hunt the enemy on the Seven Seas.

For the war has reached even our harbor. Out of the boatshop that used to build trim, costly speedboats and knockabouts for rich men's sons to race, comes a stream of grey-coated broad-beamed mine-tenders, ready to slip away about their grim business. The wharf where the great red and orange buoys, like toys for giant babies, lay waiting to be scraped and painted and hoisted aboard the lighthouse tenders, is now a Coast Guard station. An armed sentry unlocks the heavy gates when you enter to be registered and finger-printed before you can even row your skiff along the shore. Day and night patrol boats, some of them yachts of yesterday, slide in and out of the harbor; every morning the big bombers roar overhead and out to sea.

Ashore we are working together, citizens and summer folks, learning new ways in spite of old snags and stiff habits—"Why should we measure this?" "Why should we practise that?" We have Air Raid Wardens and a Motor Corps; we have First Aid, Home Nursing, and Nutrition classes. We have an emergency set-up with every pot and cot in the township catalogued. Our Red Cross workroom is warm with the neighborly spirit that is America.

Our young men are going, some to the shipyards and airplane factories, more to the Army and Navy and Marines. One captain who used to sail a summer yacht shipped last winter as third mate of a freighter; battered by a North Atlantic gale, chased by submarines, she lost the rest of the convoy but somehow made port. One boy came home alive out of the oil-flaming Java Sea—and shipped again as soon as his leave was up.

Of course we have our spy scares. One evening the cottagers across the bay saw lights moving on top of Eagle Mountain.

They called up the county seat, and a carful of officials rushed down. In the darkness they cautiously climbed the trail and came upon—a bunch of little girls camping out. Which, we wondered, was more surprised.

Then there was the man who came to town and took a room at the undertaker's. One morning they found him taking pictures over by the fish packing factory, so they called the Coast Guard and had him arrested.

"There's two hundred workin' there on government orders," our fishman told us, "it would be a fine place for a bomb."

But later the undertaker's mother-in-law deflated the tale: "I guess he was really all right. You see it was a Monday morning, and he was just trying to get a pretty picture of the factory houses with the washing out on the lines."

Not all our stories are like that—and not all are told. There came a day when fourteen Gloucester fishermen were brought in by the Coast Guard, when the Civilian Defense set up cots in the schoolhouse and the Canteen Unit served supper and breakfast. But the reporters were turned away, and it was a week before the Boston papers carried the "incident": a submarine that took sixty or seventy shots to sink two small trawlers in broad daylight. Those Nazis—"lousy shots" they were—didn't even take the trawlers' oil or supplies—just started firing without warning. The crews took to their dories and rowed for thirty-six hours with no food and little water; it was in a thick fog that they came ashore at Gull Light. Most of them bore Italian and Portuguese names ("outlandish," the women said they looked), but they will be going back to their draggers and trawlers. And the Maine lobstermen will keep right on lobstering.

"Why would a U-boat waste shells that way?" I asked Cap'n Henry as he sailed us into Herring Cove. Cap'n Henry was eighty last July, but he is as sturdy as his sloop and he can still handle her as deftly as ever. All the scorn of a decent, brave man, for senseless barbarism was in his voice now:

"It's jest fun for them, I s'pose. See that lifeboat hauled up there? One o' the boys found her driftin' out beyond the Light—empty. A Norwegian lumber vessel went down out there, they say; there was provisions aboard the lifeboat, and ten o' these."

From his cabin Cap'n Henry pulled out an oil-skin coat, new, the best we had ever seen. The label inside was "Made in Scotland."

It breezed up fresh as we sailed home across the harbor. Wrapped in that warm oilskin, I thought of the seaman who never wore it. Perhaps he had slipped away at night in his fishingboat from some Norwegian fjord, some village like ours; had reached a Scottish port and sailed again in the war against the invader. I thought of what one of our women had said:

"We don't care what it does to us if only we can help end this war!"

*by Haldeen Braddy*

### AWRY

Man plants one tree he hopes  
Will far out-top the rest  
And grow into an harborage  
For the eagle's nest.

But eagles wheel on wings  
Wise to tricks of folk  
And build their nests of brambles  
In rock and scraggy oak.

*by Louis Bliss Gillet*

## JOY OF THE WILDERNESS IN ALASKA

FOR satisfying man's innate love of the wild no other country could surpass Alaska. Along that labyrinth of inland seas which is its southern gateway, the primeval forests of western hemlock and spruce and cedar, skirting the shores, rising in mountain walls, and stretching away interminably into the unknown, stir a wild responsive passion in a man's heart. The woods stand as they originally grew, and are as yet quite undespoiled. All along waterfalls come rushing down through them from the melting snowfields above: sometimes mere ribbons of silver down the cliffs, sometimes interrupted cascades deep in ravines, sometimes great dashing floods pouring into the sea. "The mystery and mightiness of mountain and running water are everywhere."

Clear sunny days are coveted for the views along the way, but there are compensations for the more usual overcast and rainy weather. When the summits of the mountain banks are shrouded in cloud and mist is trailing down their slopes, disclosed peak swiftly interchanged with blotting shower, one feels even from sea level as if he were up in the mountains. This is a most appropriate introduction to Alaska. Along the deep sheltered bays farther north, mountains rise straight up, rugged and forested, from placidly calm, reflection-haunted waters, while through the wide cloves between them appear vast snowfields and soaring peaks spreading away far into the distance. Indeed Alaska is the veritable home of mountains. Much of its coast is thus bordered by them. The great Rocky Mountain system culminates in the ranges of the interior, and comes to its superb climax in the stupendous mass of Mount McKinley.

Coming to Alaska in May or early June is to overtake the spring again and watch it gradually creep up the mountains: from the green of the lower open lands, especially round the water-

courses, up to where the alders are still golden-budded and on to the purplish haze of winter twigs and snow at the top. These zones of the different seasons linger long in Alaska. At the very end of June you can traverse unbroken snow yet on the upper ranges, and clamber down through golden-catkined alders and devil's club just unfolding on the steep slopes of the canyons to the alders' and willows' summer of full leaf in the valley below. Even late in August violets and anemones and early daisies can be found still on the summits. In this northern land the victory of spring is very local. Go to some more exposed and backward region, even when nature round the village seems to have settled into summer, and you will find spring growths just awakening there: ruddy crimson brightening in the swamp growths, the sunshine of tiny yellow green cottonwood leaves in the river flats and on the lower mountain slopes, while the great pyramidal mountain across the river is still wintry dark and barred with snow in its ravines. But despite the different climate with every exposure nature assimilates all into a seasonal average.

Moreover, for all the divergence in landscape and climate in the various parts of the earth, there is an underlying and all-embracing unity throughout nature. The icy streams, pouring from under Alaskan mountain-top snowbanks and starting up the fine, intensely green moss everywhere round their meanderings over the snow-cleared flats in front, are the same phenomenon witnessed in New England in early April where the grass first greens round pasture springs and alongside the rills into which they brim over.

Experience of the wild country below Kodiak brought home to me the truth Hudson somewhere points out that the way certain scenes affect us is a reversion to our fundamental animal nature. It is akin to the savage joy a man sometimes feels in the fury of battle, or at overcoming a wild animal without weapons, or the thrilling satisfaction it gives one to see a man do either by instinctive abandon or force of will the uttermost with his body of which man is capable. This was the feeling of exultation which made one late afternoon there so memorable, and which has filled my whole being on many another occasion when I was thrown wholly on my own resources and circumstances tested my wits

and physical prowess to the full. This Buskin River region was thrillingly wild. It was bear-haunted by report, hazardous to cross at nightfall on account of treacherous swamps and woodlands blocked with fallen trees, but particularly for the maze of streams that beset the way, swift-currented and of uncertain depth. But what a deep sense of satisfaction it gave me, though dripping wet and shivering with cold and excitement, to reach at last the vantage peak that had irresistibly lured me on, and to look over to the source lake afar, and on to the billowy, storm-gathering ranges beyond. Meanwhile violet green swallows, not to be found in the village, were swooping over the summit in zigzag flight, their breasts flashing silver, and from the overgrown fields and dingles below rang out the sweet evening song of the other birds. For far flights and the infinite providence of nature supply every suitable nesting place with them even in the most remote and unvisited regions of wild country on islands in the uttermost parts of the sea.

The effects of natural agencies,—heat, cold, water, storms, convulsions of the earth,—are more apparent in Alaska than elsewhere. The configuration and most striking features of this land are the making of the glaciers. Mountains have been built up, channels traced for the rivers, basins hollowed out for the lakes, meadows filled in little by little for the sun-worshipping flowers long after. The high passes between the mountains commemorate the glaciers' ancient courses. Passes from the coast inland indicate their former outlets, though they now furnish routes for the migrating birds down from the great fly-ways in the interior. As the live glaciers recede, vegetation gradually comes back in the order of its hardihood, and more and more birds come in to nest and breed as it evolves toward its climax growth. The much enduring stumps to be found in certain sections of Glacier Bay, for example, often of trees that attained to an age of two hundred years or more between the ebb and flow of the glaciers, evidence not only the slowness of these changes but how fully the character of the landscape has been fashioned by them. The vast deltas and clay-deposited flatlands are relics of glacial rivers. Even the fascination of the great whirling-currented flood of the Yukon is its appeal to the imagination through being

mountain-born, and in great part glacier-fed. Study the outgoing channels of the streams from the snowfields on high, and the craters which the caved-in snow forms round springs there, and you will see in miniature what has gone on in the land as a whole.

In a few hours you can now visit by plane the very heart of this glacier country. That is Glacier Bay. For suitable weather you may have to wait weeks, but what you see amply pays for no end of waiting. First you pass the densely forested mountains bordering St. Stephen's Channel and on Admiralty Island; you then cross Lynn Canal and over the broad Icy Straits, looking very serene from aloft and very blue in contrast to the white icy wilderness which gradually takes on definition beyond them. High mountains begin to loom up on the skyline to the north. The utter treelessness of the region is impressive after the heavily forested Alaskan shores to which you have grown accustomed, for the little vegetation existent there is imperceptible in the great barren whole. The waters are interspersed with bare islands, moraine deposits left by the ancient glacier which formerly covered all of this sixty mile deep bay. Another striking peculiarity of the scene to eyes unacquainted with the extreme north is the combination of the sea with rock, ice, and snow, as on highest mountain tops. The foothills along the shore gradually ascend in broad-shouldered or sharply serrated ranges, intervened by wide snowfields, and separated by deep chasms in which snow collected from the fall of innumerable winters is pressed into the ice that starts the glaciers. These cleave deep fiords between the mountains for their passage to the sea. The encompassing ranges sawtooth into rugged spires, tower higher and higher, group beyond group, and gather toward the head of the stupendous Pacific Glacier, far behind which the lofty mass of Fairweather rises supreme against the western sky. In the nearer ranges majesty succeeds to wild confusion and turbulence. The shadows the westering sunlight cast down their slopes, the afternoon I saw them, lay soft as an ethereal bloom over their iron rigidity. The sunlight only broke in streaks of silver across their sharp crests and down the supporting ridges, or pierced deep to the heart of some glacier which then shone dazzlingly white between the shadows. When one of these peaks chanced

to lift itself in steeping sunshine, it moved you as a spiritual presence. The light with which it glowed seemed to come from within. It came alive. To the eastward the terrain broadens out, but snow, cliffs, and sea together make scenery unparalleled in austere grandeur. You seem to be looking as far as the vast recently explored icefields behind Mount St. Elias,—the largest glacial system in the world,—so limitless and extensive these ice and snow wastes seem, interrupted by gigantic, outcropping ribs of rock, miles and miles without end. The sense of infinite space awes you.

Such a manifestation of the outcome of natural forces, utterly devoid of the sustenance of life and the constant prey of the elements, is not without terror for man. But nature here does not seem dead as in the depths of the Grand Canyon or on the barren reaches of the desert. For there is the activity of a tremendous life-force in the movement and erosion of the glaciers. Not only has the whole land been carved out and featured by the elements and the glaciers together, but "the world, though made, is yet being made;—the moraine from the glaciers is being ground and outspread for coming plants—coarse boulders and gravels for forests, finer soil for grasses and flowers—while the finest part of the grist, seen hastening out to sea in the draining streams, is being stored away in darkness and builded particle on particle, cementing and crystallizing, to make the mountains and valleys and plains of other predestined landscapes, to be followed by still others in endless rhythm and beauty." Even this elemental desolation of Glacier Bay, if one examines it at close range, impresses one with the insuppressible persistence of life against what seem insuperable odds, not only in the few remaining timberline spruces and hemlocks, that grip the rocks with a joyous will to live, but in the lesser vegetation that re-establishes itself at the slightest retreat of the foe, and in the flowers that flourish so gayly at the very edge and even on top of the ice, if the slightest topsoil has lodged there. Twice John Muir was visited by a hummingbird, while sledding on the very face of the great glacier that bears his name! And you recall how he reflected on one of these ice-floe gardens: "Though the storm-beaten ground it is growing on is nearly half a mile high, the glacier centuries ago

flowed over it as a river flows over a boulder; but out of the cold darkness and glacial crushing and grinding comes this warm, abounding beauty and life to teach that what we in our faithless ignorance and fear call destruction is creation finer and finer."<sup>1</sup>

The great mountain chains by which Alaska is dominated largely determine the weather there. The high Endicott Range to the north serves as a barrier to cut off the arctic winds so that much of the interior has still cold in winter instead of raging winds. In the high passes of the mountains along the 1800-mile arc of the Alaska Peninsula and the Aleutian Islands, the warm air of the Japanese current meets with the cold air off the Arctic current in Bering Sea. Through the force of these contacts, and the precipitate condensation therefrom, storms are born. Father Hubbard believes that these are not alone local in effect, causing the lowery weather and copious rains that prevail throughout Southeastern Alaska, but that "the rotation of the earth gives a west-to-east movement to them, and they spread from the Aleutians across the Gulf of Alaska and across North America, driving the weaker north-to-south storms along with them into the Atlantic and giving us our normal and prevailing storms. It is only when the Aleutian storms do not form for a continued length of time," he argues, "that we have cold winters in New England and in the eastern United States, because the cold of Hudson Bay can then slip down unmolested toward the Gulf of Mexico."<sup>2</sup>

When high mountains and deep water are juxtaposed, earthquakes are likely to occur. In no other region is this more evident than along much of the Alaskan coast, which is subject to volcanic eruptions, deluging the land with ashes, puncturing the valleys with spurts of scorching smoke, or cracking up and giving a new course to old glaciers.

Living habitually under the influence of such conditions as prevail generally in Alaska brings out all the hardihood in a man, makes him not only physically fit but puts sinews in his character. From gazing on far horizons and experience of unblazed trails, a man becomes aware of the full resources of his

<sup>1</sup>John Muir—*TRAVELS IN ALASKA*—Boston, 1915, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup>B. R. Hubbard—*CRADLE OF THE STORMS*—1935, p. 60.

body and of his own soul. He gains a new creed. Alaska as yet has use for very few specialists. The man who makes good there is a man proper with his hands, capable of any manual work that falls to his lot, indomitable in self-reliance, good humor, resourcefulness. No man who cannot measure up to these exacting requirements need expect to succeed; if he does, they make a man of him. There you will find rugged individualism of the best sort, and yet on occasion of community interest, such as installing a new piping system and relaying the streets in Fairbanks, you will find men working together in a veritable carnival spirit.

On the other hand in the immediate presence of elemental forces as apparent as they are in Alaska, a man gains a new sense of "the function of nature in giving a scale to life, some sort of perspective in which man may take a relative measure of himself and his mortal career. In the mere massiveness of nature, in the comparative eternity of her life in the elements of air, earth and ocean, in the impressive tumult and the no less impressive peace of her changing moods from day to day, in the vast power and certainty of her life-processes in sunlight, in the succession of seasons and the phenomena of the death and birth of things in multitude of being—in all this there is the sense of the infinite in opposition to which man recognizes his own finitude. Napoleon, absorbed in the spectacle and mastery of merely human things, there where human qualities of intelligence, force and strategy count for most, may seem even to himself a kind of demi-god whom life obeys; but the man, constantly in sight of the hills and streams and their tempests, constantly open to the inflowing on his soul of the mysterious agencies of cloud and sunshine, of darkness and peril, and of the varied beneficence as well as the hard rebuffs of nature, retains the true sense of humanity as a creature".<sup>3</sup>

When spring has got fairly under way, it is a wonder to see how quickly the green and flowers come in. Alaska's long, uninterrupted hours of light in summer make for a growth almost tropical. First the snow melts down in the hollows of the hills

<sup>3</sup>George Edward Woodberry—*APPRECIATION OF LITERATURE*—N. Y., 1907, pp. 57, 58.

where it has been deep. They are matted and brown for a while, then green, then "blossom by blossom the spring comes in", flower after flower, until the ground is thickly strewn with spring beauties and violets,—yellow and blue,—narcissus, anenomes, orchises, shooting-stars, and later, dazzlingly bright patches of arnica. These are all gone within ten days or a fortnight, or quite buried beneath the tall grass, firewood, and salmon berry bramble that have rushed up in a dense overgrowth waist high, which taxes a man climbing to force his way up through. Meanwhile on the tops of the mountains the true alps have been peeping out with each encouragement of warmth until the ground is gay with the variety of them, and the summits blossom.

Finally when the sun comes out to stay and summer really triumphs over clouds and cold, you bask in the steady sunshine with peculiar comfort, letting it sink in and permeate your whole being, and put you in vital harmony with all the life-giving forces of nature. Then is the time to seek one of the many grass-topped promontories of rock jutting out into the sea on the coast, and to revel in the profusion of flowers blooming there. During June such places are hanging gardens of blossom: mazes of violets, deep purple orchises, yellow betony and the nodding brown fritillaria bells, and the handsome and everywhere prevalent lupine in all shades,—creamy white, palest lavender, and pink, as well as the common purple and blue,—and all down the crags outcroppings of the lovely shore cinquefoil, with its rich yellow flowers and iridescent gray-green leaves. Such outland promontories are wild sea idylls with gulls and oyster-catchers basking and feeding in the masses of old gold seaweed on the exposed shoals below, ducks swimming in the water, cormorants, guillemots, and horn-billed puffins flying by, and land birds contributing their quota of song in happy unison. Nature is radiant. You breathe in accord with the warmth, color, and life around. The vital forces within you glow. Like the singing birds and all vegetation you give yourself up to physical well-being and content.

The wild flowers in Alaska are even more to my taste than the cultivated, deservedly famous as they are, and the higher the altitudes in which these wild ones grow, the more impressive they are.

What lure do potted plants display  
Which never lived outdoors a day,  
While in the marge of melting snow  
The self-respecting flowers grow?

On the vast uplands that environ in a fifty-mile circuit Mount McKinley and his majestic fellows, the conspicuous flowers on the lower swarded meadows, where the caribou graze, are the delicate powder blue Jacob's ladder, the vari-colored chiming bells, and the few-flowered, vivid rose purple fireweed. All these brighten the eyes. One flower I found on the wetter lands here especially interested me, because I had come across it in as widely separated places as the Cantabrian Mountains in Spain and the west coast of Newfoundland. This was the butterwort, with a spurred violet-like flower of the same color, and slimy yellow green leaves, growing flat on the ground, the stickiness of which snares the insects on which it feeds. But as one climbs the higher tiers of meadow, and enjoys the thrill of following paths made by the wild animals up into the craggy heights,—the usual paths in the Denali wilderness,—he is still more delighted over the great beds of the pretty, white, eight-petalled *Dryas* and the exquisite fragility of the pale yellow Iceland poppy pirouetting on the stiff breeze. On the high uplands and moors grows the crisp, half-sere alpine painted cup, sunset-tinted in crimson and madder. But it is the topmost alpine that wake the deepest joy of all: a prolific bunch of deep rose *Claytonia* cropping out of the scree, which accentuates its ephemeral delicacy, tufts of moss campion pricking their green cushions of fine leaves with pink stars, and above all the charming, fragrant, alpine forget-me-not, studding the bare summits with earth-hugging clumps of heavenly blue. This forget-me-not, the loveliest of them all, has been appropriately chosen the territorial flower. Intense color seems to burn with an inner fire, and looking "with spirit past the sense" even a flower can touch to deeps within.

These little flowerets fulfilling their lives so bravely only up there in the cold, and drooping disconsolately when transported to lower levels contribute much to the exhilaration that always comes with making the top of a high mountain. Your spirit rises, as you issue out of the obscurity of the woods below, out of the barricade of undergrowth which has its lease of life just above timberline, and stride freely over the rocks and turf of the

weather-stripped open. Nowhere else, unless it be far out to sea, do you get such a tonic sense of strength and purity combined. To feel the nearer presence of natural agencies, such as tempests and frosts, that have formed and featured the land, brings you even closer to nature. You exult in the bare, undulating ridges, gradually rising higher and higher as they recede and luring you so invitingly on; in some front of glacier discerned afar, green of sea billow crevassed with blue of skies; in peaks suddenly revealed by parting mists sharp against cleared sky; in the stirring sense of twilight enveloping and withdrawing all this wild grandeur into night. In the midst of such elemental aspects of nature any weakness seems craven. Such sublimity is chastening, and shames our fallen and traitor lives. This is the joy of the wild that rouses the stamina and heroic in us. Under its stimulus our manhood rises to its full stature. Such experiences wake "the inner consciousness that aspires", lift our souls into a mood of prayer. "In the wilderness. . . souls are not beaten down by breath of mortals; they burn straight flame there up to the parent Spirit."

The moors and mountain sides of the Alaska Peninsula and of the chain of the Aleutian Islands fairly ring with bird song the long June days. The Alaska fox sparrow's song, though not quite the stirring outburst of wild, rich melody of the Labrador bird is the most constant song hereabouts,—outpealing, joyous, and bright. These sparrows are so full of song during the nesting season that they just will not be put off. An old bird I watched being teased by a fledgling for food simply turned his back on him and sang heartily three or four times with utter disregard of the begging. Another I stopped to watch, he was singing so lustily, became a bit self-conscious, but not being disposed either to stop or to fly, just turned his back on me and continued. But the singing season in Alaska is notably short and local. When I left Kodiak on the Fourth of July, the birds were still singing freely, though the heyday of their song was over, but when I reached Mt. McKinley Park, July 8th the thrushes had already stopped singing, and only the Gambel's sparrow and tree sparrow occasionally broke into song. The robins, which were there the Eastern species, did not sing even at dawn! And yet July 7th at Curry, less than a hundred miles away on the south side of the

great range, at least one olive-backed thrush and a chorus of hermit thrushes were singing up to eleven thirty at night!

Some of the Alaskan birds' songs are inferior to those of their eastern relatives. They strike the ear as thinner, broken, or unperfected in form, less smoothly articulate, falling short in quality and carrying power. This is noticeable in birds as different as the Western robin (which is the form round Seward, that is, along the coast of Alaska), Townsend's warbler, or the Western winter wren. The Western robin in Alaska does not sing nearly as much as the Eastern robin nor as heartily. His is a softer song, rather amorphous, a song in which the component parts seem blurred and confused. The first part of the Townsend warbler's song reminds you of the black-throated green's, especially as you hear it out of the high evergreens, but it ends quite differently in an indiscriminate trill. The general character of the Western winter wren's is like its Eastern relative's, but it is not delivered with the same gusto and abandon; the turns about are not stressed as much, and the song does not end in the same astonishing elfin trill of insect-high notes.

But bleak weather and desolate surroundings bring out the full beauty of bird song, show how it "reveals the graces of nature's spirit". To hear the pealing of the white-crowned sparrow in Labrador, or the melodious abandon of the solitaire on some barren Rocky Mountain slope, or the deep-hearted pathos of the golden-crowned sparrow here in Alaska is to understand what a bird song can mean. The seemingly broken-off, abrupt ending of the golden-crown's song gives it a pathos even richer than the white-throated sparrow's. The golden-crown's is peculiarly the voice of this region. In the sweetness and pathos and the indomitable spirit with which it sings in the face of all discouragements of weather lies all the burden of a country harassed by the elements, everywhere bearing the marks of struggle against adverse conditions, a land where loveliness has to fight for supremacy and yet where it wins out against all set-backs so triumphantly in the end.

Some Alaska birds are associated only with the barren mountain tops, like Hepburn's rosy finch and the wheat-ears and snowflakes, but none of these is a brilliant songster. The wheatear is one of the dozen or so birds that migrate to Alaska from Asia.

I wondered where I had seen it before, and recalled that it was in Egypt in winter and in Greece. It is depicted, too, on murals in the tombs of the nobles at Luxor. The flash of barred black and white which the snowflake shows in flight is his finest song,—a start of beauty on some windswept ridge you will not soon forget. Early in the season the American pipit shoots up in a flight song, like a diminutive skylark's, which he tinkles out ecstatically over the summits, but this spring-hearted little glee of his is too faint to attract many people's attention. Unlike the flowers, it is not so much the birds of the summits as the chorus of the birds at dawn that most moves you. Being out alone for this awakening song of the birds puts you in accord with the spirit of morning. Nature is so pure and holy at that hour as to make man seem sordid and depraved by comparison. You learn that "the infinite springs of the Eternal" may reach you even through the joyous outpouring of song on the part of the birds. Such music does not so much remind you of something that it is not, as give you insight into something deeper and higher within, that it in part is. It awakens your senses to the inner significance of nature, puts you in unison with the spiritual forces of the universe. In this dawn song, several birds are particularly memorable. The winter wren sings oftenest and most bewitchingly mornings. Hermit thrushes are then at their holiest and best. Dawns when the lovely-plumaged pine grosbeak broke into his quietly rapturous warble,—pure-hearted, sweet-flowing, care-free,—his song seemed the very voice of the hour, the authentic carol of morning. Like the thrushes' songs, it has about it then a serene inner radiance of spirituality.

But at Kodiak it was the whistling and trills of the varied thrushes that fascinated me. The last stand of the ubiquitous Sitka spruce flourish there. The rest of the Aleutian Islands from here westward are practically treeless. In parts of Kodiak, however, the trees mass into great forests, and attain to dimensions of two and even three feet in diameter and a hundred and more feet in height. They are columnar and majestic; stand in serried ranks illumined with shafts of sunlight that interpenetrate them down to the open undergrowth fretwork of devil's club expanding its great handsome leaves interspersed with thyrsi of blossom. From the very first these woods strike you as strange. Their unique

effect is due primarily to broad layers of yellow green moss with which the branches of the trees are matted. This moss does not droop or hang, but loads the branches horizontally like heavy masses of snow. In color it contrasts strikingly with the blue green of the needles and the sturdy green of the deciduous devil's club. The prevailing dampness and heavy rainfall keep it fresh and luxuriant. It thrives as a sacrophytic growth throughout the year, oddly decking and weighing down the branches, but apparently doing little harm to the trees. It gives an appearance of great age to them, much-enduring, growth-encrusted. If you climb one of these old patriarchs and grasp a moss-laden branch, you are deluged with a heavy shower of volcanic ash lodged there from the twenty inch fall during the eruption of Katmai twenty-eight years ago. How little wind must normally blow there! Perhaps the moss finds a nutritive virtue in volcanic ash, which the crops there do not find. These deep, enchanted woods, always mysterious, seem, when mist-veiled in lowery weather, peculiarly withdrawn in primeval wildness.

The whistling of the varied thrushes seems to give voice to all the wild mystery of that strange, silent forest. Theirs is a queer voice, and yet hypnotizing. In the dusk the first time I heard it, I took it to be the call of some animal, and not a bird at all. It is between a child's whistle and a mountain frog's trill, piercing the air, uttered at rather long intervals and in varying pitches. It is "very loud and penetrating, a single long-drawn note, repeated in several different keys, some of the high-pitched ones with a strong, vibrant thrill. The succession in which these notes are slowly uttered is irregular; a high note, and then a low one, then a medium, with apparently no set arrangement. Each note grows out of nothing, swells to a full tone, and then fades away to nothing." With this unique, bespelling whistle the varied thrushes can make the silent woods hum and tingle and thrill, especially in the secret hour of dawn when they dominate the song.

The greatest thing Alaska has to show is of course Mount McKinley, or Denali, as the Indians called it, the "High One" or the "Home of the Sun". But the weather is tricky there dur-

ing the summer; the higher peaks are prevailingly covered with clouds, and I suppose the majority of tourists leave Alaska, with very unsatisfactory views of the mountain or no sight of it at all. The day I journeyed up on the train from Seward was sunny for the most part, but very hazy. There were stirring views of the great range at several points just below Talkeetna. Although we were some sixty miles distant, the country intervening is so flat that we could dimly discern all the major peaks afar, phantom-like in the haze, unbelievable, rising so prodigiously high, more like thunderheads towering on the horizon than solid mountains. Mount McKinley, always a mass of shadow-broken white, for its snow never melts enough to expose its under surface, from this point is a majestic, elongated dome rather than a peak, though from the airport at Fairbanks, more than twice the distance away, it is sharply conical, shooting up high on the horizon.

When you first come in sight of the mountain from the park highway as you near the hotel camp sixty-six miles in, you are again first and most deeply impressed by its astounding loftiness. The way the height to which it rises surmounts all is just as it should be with the highest mountain peak in the United States. No mountain in the Himalayas, I believe, shows an unbroken 15,000 foot elevation of permanent snow above the base from which it rises. The first day I saw McKinley from here it looked particularly ethereal with its stern contours softened in the atmosphere of a surprisingly warm day, and rising as it did into the cirrus clouds which drifted like a great snow plume off its summit.

Camp Eielson is perfectly located for the view which many journey all the way to Alaska to see. It is appropriately named after the intrepid Alaskan pioneer in aviation. Its stands high on an upland shoulder affording full, unobstructed view of the mountain perhaps thirty miles away. Although only 3,700 feet above sea level, it seems, on account of latitude and cold, much higher, as if on a mountain top itself. Lesser mountain wings sweep and roll and spread in vast undulations for miles and miles round-about. Here seems the dwelling-place of "the grey, old gods whom chaos knew, the sires of nature," which are still at work

everywhere in Alaska. All the area surrounding the camp for miles is utterly treeless and bare except for the thick sward and profusion of flowers. The variant burnt orange and rust and ashen color in the nearer ranges to the south suggest volcanic origin and remind you a little of Grand Canyon coloring. Straight ahead you look far below over the broader gravel bed and bars of the glacial river and across the sombre green herbage now covering the outermost tongue of the dead portion of the huge Muldrow Glacier, and up the arid and barren foothills to the great towering mountain itself,—a superb emanation of pure, gleaming white snow. The gaze wanders over the bright green of the immediate uplands and downward slopes as it gradually fades into the rich, dull green now covering the end of old glacier and that in turn into the dull gray and purple of the great waste flanking it on up the gradually ascending heights to the great white head which is the crown of all.

Sometimes at sunset on the broad moors round Wonder Lake, twenty miles beyond, a profound stillness settles over the earth, and, so sharply contrasting with the more usual wind and weather, sinks into and calms the spirit with a sense of great peace. In the foreground facing the mountains a golden plover is wildly chirruping as he runs some little hummock back and forth, and a jaeger, that embodiment of winged grace, suddenly comes into view, skimming every contour of those rolling uplands with a marvellous dexterity and ease of flight. Watch the sunset transfigure the mountains, and finally halo their supreme crests with the glory of the day's last light. A broad zone of cloud is first stretched across the monarch's knees, cinereous and sulphur, shot through with gold. It shadows the foothills which in turn cast a play of varied and changeful lights on the supporting ranges beyond. Then the westering sunlight falls bright under it and sets the foot hills aflame. It creeps gradually upward, growing more and more ethereal. It makes a gleaming majesty of the vast tracts of snow above, concentrating at last on the highest summits. It unhastily surmounts Russell and Foraker, the monarch's loftiest neighbors, and is then gone from all but the topmost dome of Mount McKinley itself where it lingers long. The evanescence with which this last rosy glow fades and finally

goes out into the cold, unilluminated white of snow at night is as tender and subtle as the fading of a flower and at the same time sublime in magnificence of dignity. Such a transcendent vision of sunset reflected on heights of eternal snow makes for spiritual communion through nature up to "the great Light beyond all", the "loftier Clear", in which the color and song and mystery of life all culminate, and to which all human souls aspire.

*by Sophronia Stekol*

### SWEET BIRD

Sweet bird,  
With your lascivious note,  
You probed recesses of my deepest wound.  
I heard  
The penetrating sound  
From your full throat.

Spirit of pain,  
Forbear to quicken  
The agony in hope of complete cure.  
Refrain—  
This much I can endure—  
Leave me to sicken.

by *Thomas Lyle Collins*

## THOMAS WOLFE

OUT of the vigorous American renaissance which began in the second decade of this century grew the literary myth of the "Great American Novel". By this was meant a novel which should capture completely the spirit and meaning of this immense and bewildering new society of ours. Half a century before, Walt Whitman had flung a ringing challenge to the future artists of America. In the period during and following the First World War, the new schools of American writers attempted, and with no little success, to meet that challenge. An enormous body of good writing appeared, and quite a bit that deserved even to be called great. But of the novels written during that period, none seemed really deserving of the designation, "The Great American Novel".

However, of the attempts to capture and immortalize this spirit of Twentieth-Century America, there have been three which have been of major importance.

In his trilogy, *U.S.A.*, John Dos Passos attempted a literary project of more comprehensive scope than any previous American work. With striking economy and a deft hand, he made sketches of the lives of more than a score of typical Americans who might have lived in the period between 1910 and 1930, and wove and interwove these sketches into an even-textured fictional whole. But these sketches had a certain drabness and colorlessness about them, and Mr. Dos Passos, in order to suggest the melodramatic, tabloid aspect of American life, inserted the "News-reels"—impressionistic glimpses of contemporaneous newspaper headlines, news stories, popular songs, and so forth. However, there was still lacking the strong lyric strain which is an essential part of the American temper, and so the author also wove in imagistic stream-of-consciousness passages of an autobiographical nature, calling this "The Camera Eye". The result was a novel

which looked something like a department store and which, though fascinating and at times even moving, was somehow not great. Probably the chief flaw was the author's failure to synthesize the prosaic, commonplace America and the poetic, lyrical America into an organic artistic whole. Furthermore, Dos Passos cannot be criticized on the grounds of something he was not trying to do, and he would probably be the first to admit that he was not trying to deal with the whole of America, but rather only the American metropolis.

The poetic spirit of the American people was more nearly perfectly expressed by Carl Sandburg, the modern disciple of Whitman, who, after several volumes of mumbling and fumbling, finally burst out into a great American song, *THE PEOPLE, YES*. But although much more powerful and skillful than his teacher, Sandburg is afflicted with the same blind optimism as Whitman. A further limitation is that, although the book is filled with *The People*, there are no real people in it—only shifting masses without name or shape. *The People*, yes, but people, no. One suspects that actually *The People* do not exist as an entity, that instead they constitute a myth comparable to the much-discussed but mythical American Youth. Needless to say, I am not comparing U.S.A. and *THE PEOPLE, YES*, since the latter is a book of verse; I am merely pointing out that *THE PEOPLE, YES* contains an element of the American temper which Dos Passos's novel lacks.

In 1929 a virtually unknown young writer named Thomas Wolfe published an autobiographical novel called *LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL*. Many favorable comments were made by the promiscuously favorable reviewers, the sales were brisk, and a few years later the novel was reprinted in the *MODERN LIBRARY* Series, a mark of moderate distinction for living writers. In 1935 Wolfe's second novel, *OF TIME AND THE RIVER*, appeared. Again the reviewers cast their superlatives recklessly, again the sales were good. Comments such as the one by Lewis Gannett (reprinted on the book jacket of a later edition) showed that at least Wolfe's style had an amusingly strong influence on impressionable readers: "Thomas Wolfe writes like a mighty, furious Paul Bunyan, with the passionate love of America of a Walt Whitman and the enraged adolescent idealism of a Shelley

also pulsing in his veins. . . . The 912 pages . . . tumble, pour, roar, sing with savage joy and fury."

In the meantime excerpts from Wolfe began to appear occasionally in American literature anthologies, and critics began to take notice of him in their surveys of the modern field. Vernon Loggins, for instance, compares him not too unfavorably with Dostoevski, but then adds deprecatingly, "The world in which he [Eugene Gant] moves is so commonplace that it can easily become tedious."<sup>1</sup>

But what no critic seems to have realized is that the appearance of Thomas Wolfe may have been an event of the utmost significance in the history of American literature: certainly, at least, his power of description and narration is unexcelled in the entire range of our literature. There is even a possibility that future generations will come to regard him as the author of *The Great American Novel* which we have so long awaited. Let us then take this popular phrase, *The Great American Novel*, as a four-unit yardstick to measure him; for in these four words lie the four main problems which the modern critic encounters in the novel. These four critical problems, in their respective order, are: *the problem of scope, the problem of greatness, the problem of significance, and the problem of form*. By this standard perhaps we may be able to decide how nearly Wolfe's novels approach the ideal of *The Great American Novel*. Since the first of these problems is the one most important to this consideration, it will be treated last.

However, before any positive critical statements about Wolfe can be made, the ground must first be cleared by an examination of the line of critical attack laid down by two representative critics, Bernard De Voto and Robert Penn Warren.

## II

What chiefly troubled Mr. De Voto about Wolfe were the long lyrical passages of flowing rhetoric—some "dark substance . . . unrelated to the proper business of fiction. . . ." The proper

<sup>1</sup>Vernon Loggins, *I HEAR AMERICA* . . . (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1937), p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard De Voto, "Genius Is Not Enough", *THE SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE*, XIII (April 25, 1936), p. 3.

business of fiction, says De Voto, is dramatic narrative, undiluted by any of this new rhetorical nonsense. "Is America lost, lonely, nameless and unknown? Maybe, and maybe not. But if it is, the condition of the novelist's medium requires him to make it lost and lonely in the lives of his characters, not in blank verse, bombast, and apocalyptic delirium."<sup>3</sup>

Mr De Voto here makes a great show of being hard-headed and commonsensical, but better critics than he have failed to survive beyond their time because they adhered to a critical dogmatism which attempts to keep poetry and fiction and comedies and tragedies and ballet and opera set completely apart from each other in neat little compartments. I wonder what Mr. De Voto would have to say about the chapters of exposition in *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*, the internal monologue in such novels as *MRS. DALLOWAY*, or the aforementioned peculiarities of *U.S.A.*? In so restricting "the proper business of fiction", he has bitten off a great deal less than he can chew.

Now if Wolfe *merely told* us that Americans are lost and lonely, there might be a basis for De Voto's criticism. If Wolfe's "dark substance" had no dramatic backbone, it would be a bore. But it must not be forgotten that Wolfe keeps an unwritten bargain with his reader: he always shows us everything he tells us, each element complementing the other. De Voto asks for lost and lonely characters: who of the readers of *OF TIME AND THE RIVER* will ever forget the enormously funny and heartbreakingly pathetic little middle-class mother, Mrs. Simpson—

"We want you to feel absolutely at home here," she said brightly. "Make this your headquarters. You will find us simple folk here, without any frills," she continued, with a glance around the living-room, letting her eye rest with brief satisfaction upon the striped tiles of the hearth, the flowered vases of the mantle, the naked doll, tied with a pink sash, on the piano, and the pictures of 'The Horse Fair,' the lovers flying before the storm, Maxfield Parrish's 'Dawn,' and Leonardo Da Vinci's 'Last Supper,' which broke the spaces of the wall, "but if you like a quiet family life, a welcome is always waiting for you here. Oh, yes—every one

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid*, p. 4.

is for each other here: we keep no secret from each other in our little family."<sup>4</sup>

And who will forget the simple courage and dignity which arose in the mother when she became conscious that Eugene had made the family the butt of a cruel joke? Or the symphonic passage which closed the episode, a passage which Mr. De Voto would have us believe is "unrelated to the proper business of fiction"—

He never saw any of them again, but he could not forget them. And as the years went on, the memory of all their folly, falseness, and hypocrisy was curiously altered and subdued and the memory that grew more vivid and dominant was of a little family, one of millions huddled below the immense and timeless skies that bend above us, lost in the darkness of nameless and unnumbered lives upon the lonely wilderness of life that is America, and banked together against these giant antagonists, for comfort, warmth, and love, with a courage and integrity that would not die, and could not be forgotten.<sup>5</sup>

Later Mr. De Voto quotes from MacLeish, "A poem should not mean, but be", and then goes on to say, "A novel *is*—it cannot be asserted, ranted, or even detonated." If De Voto had read "Arts Poetica" more carefully, he would also have seen these lines—

A poem should be equal to  
Not true:  
For all the history of grief  
An empty doorway and a maple leaf

What Wolfe has done is fill in both sides of this equation—that is, he has given us both the history of grief *and* the empty doorway and the maple leaf. (It is interesting to note that Wolfe's symbols, "a stone, a leaf, an unfound door", are remarkably similar to these employed by MacLeish.) In this manner Wolfe has achieved an effective synthesis of the prosaic and the poetic. And to say that poetry has no business in the novel is just as absurd as to say that poetry has no business in the drama, nor narrative in poetry.

De Voto continues: "A novelist represents life. When he

<sup>4</sup>Thomas Wolfe, *OF TIME AND THE RIVER* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), p. 195.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 209.

does anything else, no matter how beautiful or furious or ecstatic the way in which he does it, he is not writing fiction."<sup>6</sup> Even if we should grant this highly questionable limitation of the term fiction, we still have recourse to the vulgar retort, "So what?" For what should chiefly concern us is not whether Wolfe's writing does or does not fit into the technical category of fiction, but rather whether Wolfe's writing is or is not great. If, as many critics agree, it is true that the figures in his novels are blazing triumphs of characterization, if, as even Mr. De Voto admits may be the case, his writing is "beautiful . . . furious . . . ecstatic,"<sup>7</sup> the problem of *genre* is of secondary importance. After we have decided how good or how great Wolfe's writing is, there will be time enough to decide *what* it is.

The other major issue which De Voto brings to light is the problem of artistic integrity as manifested in a feeling for form. It is generally known that Wolfe wrote too much, was overwhelmed by the welter of words which he poured out into his stacks of ledgers, and that the editorial genius of Maxwell Perkins was mainly responsible for getting Wolfe's novels into publishable shape. And this is Mr. De Voto's point: "The artist writes a hundred thousand words about a train: Mr. Perkins decides the train is worth only about five thousand words. But such a decision as this is properly not within Mr. Perkins' power; it must be made by the highly conscious self-criticism of the artist in relation to the pulse of the book itself."<sup>8</sup> Now there is a measure of truth in this which cannot be denied. But there is a fallacy in Mr. De Voto's critical reasoning which lies in his confusing structural emphasis and form. Mr. Perkins' working with Wolfe was, without a doubt, responsible for a tightening up of the structure of Wolfe's novels; and this is indicative of a grave limitation of Wolfe's artistic powers. But no editor can, by the wielding of a blue pencil, impart *form* to a work of art; he can only lay bare the form which is somewhat obscured by surplus material— and that is what Mr. Perkins has done. If the novel had not been there in the first place, no editor's pencil could have brought it to light. Form is an integral part of the

<sup>6</sup>De Voto, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup>De Voto, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3.

work of art; every dramatic scene, every colorful characterization was *formed* by Wolfe, not by his editor. A man wanders the earth, seeking "a stone, a leaf, an unfound door"—that is the theme which imparts form to Wolfe's novels, and it is a theme which has four phases, a natural division for the four novels. When Wolfe came to the dividing line which marked the end of one phase and the beginning of another, he was not always aware of it, and this is to be regretted. But the point is that the dividing line *was* there and he *did* come to it: it was there because his feeling for the form which his great theme was to take had put it there, unconsciously though it may have been.

Mr. De Voto's most biting accusation is that Wolfe should have learned to "put a corset on his prose. . . ."<sup>10</sup> This is possibly true though certainly not to the extent that De Voto would have us believe. And a corset is often quite a handy device: it keeps the body looking trim and neat. But it also restricts free movement and respiration, and is often quite detrimental to the health. It can never be more than idle speculation to try to determine whether or not Wolfe's prose would have been better had it been corseted; but corseted or uncorseted, there is a certain statuesque quality about his style which, by comparison, makes the pale prose of the lesser American novelists seem to be suffering from malnutrition.

Robert Penn Warren, in his article, "The Hamlet of Thomas Wolfe", more or less follows the critical line laid down by De Voto—he worries about Wolfe's straining to make his characters seem significant, about Wolfe's constant repetition of his own "clichés" (a man named Homer used to be fond of that sort of thing), about Wolfe's seeming lack of discipline, "focus", and control.

In addition, Warren raises a new problem—that of objectivity in the autobiographical novel. This is best expressed by his parting shot: "And meanwhile it may be well to recollect that Shakespeare merely wrote *Hamlet*; he was *not* Hamlet."<sup>11</sup> Mr.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas Wolfe, *LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 2.

<sup>11</sup>De Voto, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup>Robert Penn Warren, "The Hamlet of Thomas Wolfe," *LITERARY OPINION IN AMERICA*, ed. by Morton Dauwen Zabel (New York, Harper Bros., 1937), p. 372.

Warren's objection is that Wolfe not only wrote about Eugene Gant, but that his own personality and feelings became identical with those of that character. The critical dictum by which Mr. Warren makes this accusation is this: that there must be no confusion between the sensibility that produces a dramatic narrative and the sensibility of the hero in that narrative.<sup>12</sup> This would be a valid criticism save that one feels that Mr. Warren's sequence of thought is from the novelist to the novel, rather than *vice versa*. That is to say, he is not keeping his eye on the critical object, which is the work of art. *Hamlet*, as a play, would be no less great if Shakespeare actually had been a prince of Denmark whose father had been murdered by his uncle. We must look to the art, not to the artist. No valid criticism can come from the comparison, explicit or implicit, of the characters of Thomas Wolfe and Eugene Gant.

It seems to me that there are two circumstances in a novel in which a charge of lack of objectivity might be justified: when the author places his own sentiments in the mouth of a character incapable of such sentiments; and when the author places himself in his novel without first objectifying his own sentiments to the extent that he can see and present himself clearly and vividly. As to the first charge, it is true that many of Wolfe's characters are "Wolfian", but this is true in varying degree for all novelists. That is to say, all characters by one novelist have something of the same quality, because all are given life by the same moving spirit.

As to the second charge, Wolfe has objectified his own character with commendable vividness and clarity. Eugene Gant-Monk Webber is one of the immortal autobiographical characters of fiction. Certainly it required an exercise of his powers of objectification for Wolfe to laugh at himself the way he did, such as in the scene in LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL where the Acting Dean of Catawba College advises Eugene not to go Over There but to stay and Do His Bit—

"Yes", said Eugene, with a pale tortured face, "I know. . . . But oh, sir—when I think of those murderous beasts, when I think of how they have menaced All That We Hold Dear,

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 367.

when I think of Little Belgium, and then of My Own Mother, My Own Sister—" He turned away, clenching his hands, madly in love with himself.

"Yes, yes," said the Acting Dean gently, "for boys with a spirit like yours it's not easy."

"Oh sir, it's hard!" cried Eugene passionately. "I tell you it's hard."

"We must endure," said the Dean quietly. "We must be tempered in the fire. The Future of Mankind hangs in the balance."

Deeply stirred they stood together for a moment, drenched in the radiant beauty of their heroic souls."

I cannot repeat too often that it is true that Wolfe has many faults, that he wrote many bad passages. But these faults are the flaws in greatness, not the limitations of talent.

In short, Mr. De Voto and Mr. Warren are trying to make a molehill out of a mountain.

### III

*The problem of greatness:* True greatness, in the strictest sense of the word, always implies a certain transcendency, an ability to rise above the particular circumstance or experience to its more universal implications. This is precisely the quality which distinguishes Wolfe from his lesser contemporaries. This is precisely why the sentimental Mr. Steinbeck, although he is a more disciplined craftsman, is a less great novelist. Wolfe had a sort of super-vision which enabled him to see people in their several artistic dimensions. He found some people, such as the Simpsons, tremendously funny, and he shared with us his belly-laugh over them—but then he penetrated beyond the comic surface to the pathetic essence. He found the Pierces to be quite wonderful—for a while he thought he had discovered the "lane-end into heaven"—but then, rising above them, he saw beyond the cloud of glory which hid them and looked upon the weariness and decay which possessed them. He was completely taken in by the magic of Starwick's glamour, but he eventually saw through it. He was enraptured by Paris "sophistication", but he eventually saw through it. This is the key to Wolfe's genius, this ability to transcend his own experiences, and once having

<sup>13</sup>Look HOMEWARD, ANGEL, p. 534.

done so, to look back upon it all and write of it with power and clarity, flooding the scene with the rich light of his own personality.

That many readers do not seem to understand fully Wolfe's use of symbols is indicated by the two critical essays mentioned above. De Voto could not see why Eugene was so preoccupied with the death of his father, and Warren failed to understand the significance of his relation with Starwick or the importance of his falling in love. Therefore it might be wise to make a thorough examination of Wolfe's theme as embodied in his symbols.

Wolfe's general theme is somewhat reminiscent of Wordsworth's *Odes on Intimations of Immortality* in that it is suggestive of the passage containing the lines "trailing clouds of glory do we come." On the title page of *LOOK HOMEWARD*, ANGEL Wolfe quotes this sentence from Tarr and McMurry—"At one time the earth was probably a white-hot sphere like the sun." Then the prefatory poem which follows explains in a measure both the quotation and the theme of the book—

. . . a stone, a leaf, an unfound door; of a stone, a leaf, a door. And of all the forgotten faces.

Naked and alone we came into exile. In her dark womb we did not know our mother's face; from the prison of her flesh have we come into the unspeakable and incommunicable prison of this earth.

Which of us has known his brother? Which of us has looked into his father's heart? Which of us has not remained forever prison-pent? Which of us is not forever a stranger and alone?

O waste of loss, in the hot mazes, lost, among bright stars on this most weary unbright cinder, lost!

Remembering speechlessly we seek the great forgotten language, the lost lane-end into heaven, a stone, a leaf, an unfound door. Where? When?

O lost, and by the wind grieved, ghost, come back again."

From this we may extract a brutally prosaic statement of Wolfe's theme: all through life we are searching for some sign—"a stone, a leaf, a door"—which will open up to us the universe of perfection and enchantment which we feel vaguely to have left behind us when we were born. The implication is that our

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 2.

souls have been torn from this enchanted heaven and imprisoned in corporeal frames here on earth. A spiritually necessary unity is wanting, for we are unable to communicate with our fellow-prisoners. Monads have no windows: "we seek the great forgotten language. . ."

Or: Wolfe notes a discrepancy between the ideal world and the real, the former figuratively represented by the sun, the latter by "this most weary unbright cinder", the earth.

Or: Wolfe believes, in a non-Christian sense, in Original Sin. We are born into the damnation of spiritual isolation, and must achieve grace by ending that isolation.

Perhaps this essential and ever-present theme may be best described by a passage from *THE WEB AND THE ROCK*, a passage of some more of Mr. De Voto's "dark substance"—

We are small grope-things crying for the light and love by which we might be saved, and which, like us, is dying in the darkness a hand's breadth off from us if we could touch it. We are like blind sucks and sea-valves and the eyeless-crawls that grope along the forest of the sea's great floor, and we die alone in the darkness, a second away from hope, a moment from ecstasy and fulfillment, a little half an hour from love.<sup>19</sup>

At the heart of Wolfe's novels is an essential paradox which does not become apparent until Eugene's visit to England: it is that there is a door, there is a way to feel at home on the earth, there is a secret room—but though when you're outside you want in, when you're inside you want out! Tradition-less America is on the outside and wants in; traditional England is on the inside and wants out. This is clearly illustrated by the following passages concerning England—

Yes, they had found a way, a door, a room to enter, and there were walls about them now, and the way was theirs. The mark of dark time and the architecture of unnumbered centuries of years were on them, and had made them what they were; and what they were, they were, and would not change.<sup>20</sup>

All his life Eugene had been seeking "an unfound door". The

<sup>19</sup>*THE WEB AND THE ROCK* (Harper & Bros., 1939), p. 627.

<sup>20</sup>*OF TIME AND THE RIVER*, p. 604.

English had found a door; had they found *the* door? He found the answer when, upon his departure, Edith Coulson told him—

"We shall remember you. . . And I hope you think of us sometime—back here, buried, lost, in all the fog and rain and ruin of England. How good it must be to know that you are young in a very young country—where nothing that you did yesterday matters very much. How wonderful it must be to know that none of the failure of the past can pull you down—that there will always be another day for you—a new beginning. I wonder if you Americans will ever know how fortunate you are. . ."

The answer is, then, that life without meaning is far better and more preferable than life with certainty and security, for the latter results in death-in-life, which Wolfe views with abhorrence in all his novels.

This paradox of man accounts for Eugene's fascination with Jewish people. Wolfe bestows upon them a symbolic rôle because they alone were at home on the earth without being enmeshed by it. They are not beset by death-in-life because their certainty is the true one—the certainty of Ecclesiastes, the certainty of pain and folly and useless endeavor. It was almost inevitable that he should fall in love with a Jewish woman.

But the two principal symbols are love and death, for they are the only things that will end the spiritual isolation of the soul. In the great poem which prefaces *OF TIME AND THE RIVER*, these symbols are presented, symbols which are expanded throughout the novel:

Whoever needs the earth shall have the earth: he shall be still upon it, he shall rest within a little place, he shall be still upon it, he shall rest with a little place, he shall dwell in one small room forever.

O flower of love whose strong lips drink us downward into death, in all things far and fleeting, enchantress of our twenty thousand days, the brain will madden and the heart be twisted, broken by her kiss, but glory, glory, glory, she remains: Immortal love, alone and aching in the wilderness, we cried to you: You were not absent from our loneliness.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 650.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 2.

The other symbols now unfold to us with greater ease. Gant's father stands for his spiritual, certain past, a past to which he can never return for certainty. This symbol may have been derived from the Bloom-Dedalus relationship in James Joyce's *ULYSSES*, particularly since Wolfe is self-admittedly indebted to Joyce. His brother Ben is the symbol for all men who cannot speak or give a sign of brotherhood. The Simpsons are the millions of lonely families in America "huddled below immense and timeless skies". In Starwick, Eugene found the unfound door: Francis could order a spaghetti dinner and make it sound like a royal banquet—thus the great shock when Eugene's illusions about Starwick crumbled. Eugene's mad desire to read all the books ever written is due to his hunger to see out over the walls of his soul into the outside world. The trains rushing through America are symbols of America itself—violent, splendid, powerful, blindly rushing through the night. The night is also symbolic of America, and the lonely men who huddle about the street-lamps and in the lighted lunch-rooms late at night take on a transcendent meaning.

It is this unity of the soul and the body of Wolfe's novels, this synthesis of the universal and the particular, which is the chief contributor to his greatness. The worlds of great artists are always complete. Homer's world was complete, as was Dante's, Shakespeare's, Goethe's. In other words, to put it crudely, they have an answer for everything. These artists, although they never lost sight of men, looked beyond and saw a vision of Man, eternal and immutable. Wolfe's *Weltanschauung* displays this same combination of completeness and accuracy, and therefore, in many ways, ranks him accordingly.

#### IV

*The Problem of Significance:* The American reading public, made acutely self-critical by Mr. Mencken et al. during the Twenties, is very message-conscious in their reading of novels. What is the author's theme? What suggestion does he have to make in his novel for the political, economic, sociological, or cultural improvement of the nation? Is Main Street stifling the finer instincts? Are we suffering from mass inhibition? Did the

World War leave the American doughboy maladjusted to society? This was the sort of question the novelist was asking, and it has been by the soundness and pertinency of his thesis that we have been inclined to judge the worth of his novel. I think this accounts in part, at least, for the hesitant reception of Wolfe's novels by the American critics. For Wolfe seemed much more concerned with his own personal problems than with the problems of America. This is why *YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN* was greeted with such sighs of satisfaction, for at last Wolfe had become "significant".

I have already spoken of Wolfe's central theme of spiritual isolation. Its universal nature is apparent. Its particular application is that while it is true in varying degree for men of all time and place, it is most true for Americans of the present day. We *are* "like blind sucks and sea-valves and the eyeless crawls that grope along the forest of the sea's great floor. . ." Our poverty of tradition, our blind materialism, our barrenness of middle-class life could not be described better. One does not have to read *YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN* to find "significance". There is significance a-plenty in Wolfe's first three novels if one will but read carefully some of the passages of "dark substance" therein.

And Wolfe for the most part avoids the sentimental fallacy of ascribing our evils to institutions. With a dim but perceptible certainty he sees that the fault lies not outside but inside, deep within the heart of man.

In *YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN* this implied belief becomes explicit. In his conclusion, called "Credo", he says "I think the enemy is single selfishness and compulsive greed."<sup>10</sup> In the chapters called "Boom Town" and "The Company" he lashes out viciously at this single selfishness and compulsive greed. And in the chapter, "Piggy Logan's Circus", he achieves an effect of strange and gripping horror of a decadent aristocracy which will watch for hours the morbidly pointless antics of a giggling moron.

In regard to Wolfe's position in our national literature, I think it is safe to say that he stands, and will stand, very close to the top. For in his novels he caught that strange and unique com-

<sup>10</sup>*YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1940), p. 742.

bination of brilliant hope and black despair which is the quintessence of the American spirit.

## V

*The Problem of Form:* The form of Wolfe's novels is enough to give any critic a nightmare. At first reading they seem to be little more than miscellaneous collections of autobiographical anecdotes and personal observations. But after complete reading and thoughtful contemplation, the nature of his literary form begins to emerge in one's mind.

First, however, a satisfactory definition of form must be found. Reading between the lines, I infer that Mr. De Voto's idea of the form of a novel is that the novel should present a relevant and closely associated sequence of dramatic incidents, each incident carrying the reader closer to the final climactic scene. This was the original form of the novel, and it served more than adequately. But it is foolish and unprofitable to view this as a fixed and immutable *genre*. The use of *genres* should be for description, not judgment. If Wolfe's works cannot be squeezed into the requirements for a novel, it is no matter of great concern.

And it is indeed doubtful if they do fit the requirements. There is quite a gulf between *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* and *OF TIME AND THE RIVER*.

Kenneth Burke has a practical and useful definition of form which will serve in this case. He says that "form is the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite."<sup>20</sup>

Applying this definition to Wolfe's works, I find three basic and interdependent forms. They are, in the order of excellence, the episode, the complete work, and the novel.

Sometimes these episodes, such as the one about the Simpsons, are very short. Sometimes, as in "The Child by Tiger" in *THE WEB AND THE ROCK* and "The World That Jack Built" in *YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN*, they are as long as a short novel. In the latter instance, they are subdivided into sub-episodes, and sub-sub-episodes, each one creating an appetite in the mind of the

<sup>20</sup>Kenneth Burke, *COUNTER-STATEMENT* (New York, Harcourt Brace & Co., 1931), p. 40.

reader, and satisfying that appetite adequately; each one having a surprising singleness and intensity of effect. The sub-episodes which go to make up a complete episode do not always observe a time or place sequence; instead, Wolfe sketches in a detail here, makes a few strokes there, until finally the whole picture is completed.

A typical episode is the one in *THE WEB AND THE ROCK* describing muscular, tweedy, pipe-smoking Preacher Reed, the Episcopalian minister who made a tremendous hit with the boys of Catawba College by taking part in their bull sessions and comparing Christ to the quarterback of a football team. This episode is a part of a larger division, a chapter describing the intellectual leader of the campus, Jerry Alsop, and owes its presence to the fact that Alsop considers Preacher Reed the third greatest man since Jesus Christ. Wolfe concludes his biting ironic description of a bull session with this passage—

And as Alsop would himself say later, when the last reluctant footsteps died away, and there were the last "good nights" upon the campus, and he stood there in the now deserted room, polishing his misty glasses, and a little husky in the throat:

"... It was puffedly delightful! Puffedly Goddamned delightful! Yes, suh! That's the only word for it!"

And it was.

This is typical of Wolfe's method of rounding off an episode with a neat and delightful shock. The artistry of this method is apparent. In those three, small, modest words, "And it was", Wolfe polishes off Preacher Reed and Jerry Alsop at one fell blow. To say that Wolfe has satisfied our appetite adequately is putting it mildly.

The second basic form, Wolfe's complete work of four novels, contains a spiritual evolution in which may be found the beginning of a conflict, the body of a conflict, and the resolution, elements of a form which should satisfy the most reactionary of critics. The beginning of the conflict is contained in *LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL*, in which a boy of energy and ambition finds himself buried in a world of pettiness and animosity and meaninglessness, and determines to escape into the outside world, where he may seek glory and love and meaning. The climactic inci-

dent is the one in which, after a violent quarrel with his family, Eugene cries triumphantly,

"... I shall get me some beauty, I shall get me some order out of this jungle of my life: I shall find my way out of it yet, though it take me twenty years more—alone."

"Alone?" said Eliza, with the old suspicion. "Where are you going?"

"Ah," he said, "you were not looking, were you? I've gone."<sup>21</sup>

OF TIME AND THE RIVER and THE WEB AND THE ROCK constitute the body of the conflict. In the first he escapes into the world, and his interests and passions diverge in a thousand different directions in his Faustian search for glory and love and meaning. In the latter his passion strikes a lens and is focussed and concentrated in his love for Esther Jack. The lens is then shattered, and the last volume, *YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN*, contains a desperate race between death and meaning. The last lines he wrote present his premonition of death and his triumphant re-affirmation of a spiritual idealism—

Something has spoken to me in the night, burning the tapers of the waning year; something has spoken in the night, and told me I shall die, I know not where. Saying:

"To lose the earth you know, for greater knowing; to lose the life you have, for greater life; to leave the friends you loved, for greater loving; to find a land more kind than home, more large than earth—

"Whereon the pillars of this earth are founded, toward which the conscience of the world is tending—a wind is rising, and the rivers flow."<sup>22</sup>

The form of each novel, then, since it is so loose, is only important as a phase of Gant-Webber's<sup>23</sup> spiritual evolution, and as a frame for Wolfe's episodic structure; it has no inherent and self-sufficient form to speak of. But Thomas Wolfe, genius that

<sup>21</sup>LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL, p. 505.

<sup>22</sup>YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN, p. 743.

<sup>23</sup>Stung by critics, Wolfe tried to become more "objective" in his last two novels by thinly disguising Eugene Gant as a new character, Monk Webber. However, the four novels may be justly considered as a whole. The criticism that Monk Webber is too much like Gant is exactly backwards: he should have been *more* like Eugene Gant, and should have been called Eugene Gant!

he was, had that inevitable instinct for form which served him twice where it failed him once.

## VI

*The Problem of Scope:* Wolfe wrote great American novels, he wrote great *American* novels, and, loosely speaking, he wrote great American *novels*. But he fails to measure up in the fourth respect: he did not write *the* great American novel. Contained in the phrase is the implication that the novel should summarize and epitomize the promise of America's becoming one of the great ages of man, just as Homer's *Iliad* epitomizes the heroic age of Greece, Dante's *Divine Comedy* the medieval age, and Shakespeare's plays the English Renaissance. This is virtually impossible. There are so many forces of disunity and skepticism present in present-day America that a novel, or even a series of novels, could not bring them all together into a coherent and comprehensible pattern. Homer and Shakespeare and Dante stand far above us because they stand at the peak of a high and mighty structure erected by men of great talent and culture, all working together. There was little in the modern world for Wolfe to stand on.

Also, Wolfe was not of the artistic temper to write such a work. The author of *The Great American Novel* must be dramatic and omnipresent; Thomas Wolfe was lyrical and uni-present. For him there was only one world and he was at the center of it.

But his third and gravest limitation was his genius: it was the tragic flaw, a flaw of which he was only too conscious. "Genius is not enough", sneers Mr. De Voto. On the contrary, the genius of Thomas Wolfe was too much. He was driven by a restlessness which kept him from achieving that cool perfection which often comes easy to lesser men.

In a reference to Coleridge in *THE WEB AND THE ROCK*, Wolfe described better than any critic has ever done his own tragic and irreparable fault: "For genius such as his, unless its owner learns the way to use it, will turn and rend him like a tiger: it can bring death to men as surely as it brings them life."

by Alexander Kern

## THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

THE sociology of knowledge—that branch of sociology which deals with the effects of social and cultural backgrounds upon the forms of thought and expression—offers a fruitful technique for the correlation of literature and society. This technique aims at being more systematic, more objective, and more refined than previous attempts to use a knowledge of society in the interpretation of literary art.<sup>1</sup> Of course the interpretation of literature as part of the cultural pattern is nothing new, but this particular discipline, besides furnishing a method for those in search of a technique, offers a breadth of grasp and a hold on objectivity which have not been achieved by those who have attacked the problem from a particular political or economic viewpoint.

If, as is often contended, the best histories are those written with a bias, it is at least in part because the author sees invidious relations between groups he dislikes and their written expression. Yet the man with a bias is liable to the defects of his virtue. First, he may fail to see the connections between the thought and position of his own group, and may claim a superior validity for the ideas of his own class, as has been the case with Marx and his followers. Second, he may make serious errors in the overzealous application of his own preconceptions, as has Parrington on Thomas Hooker, or Babbitt on Wordsworth. Finally, such a scholar may isolate his one pet factor and claim that this factor is the cause of literature. But society is too complex for such a procedure.

More helpful is the widely accepted analogy of dynamic equilibria, as worked out by Willard Gibbs, applied to biology by L. J.

<sup>1</sup>Karl Mannheim, *IDEOLOGY AND UTOPIA*, translated by L. Wirth and E. Shils (New York, 1936). Chapter V and *passim* is the basic reference for this paper.

Henderson, and to society by Pareto. Gibbs found that in a closed system with a given number of variables the equations could be worked out so as to predict what effect the change of one variable would have upon the others. But in society, and especially in literature, the system is not closed, for we cannot follow the laboratory technique of excluding outside influences,<sup>2</sup> and even the number of variables is unknown. Thus the pursuit of one variable does not produce any causal connections, since an observable change in this factor may be merely an adjustment to a change in another. To the objection of Sorokin that the change of some factors not causally or functionally related to the rest will produce no or little change in the balance of the whole,<sup>3</sup> the answer may be made in passing that science takes this into account, since it is interested in the more significant changes and tries to allow for the results of the less important variables.

Accepting the concept of equilibria, the sociology of knowledge by its inclusiveness and refined technique, minimizes the defects of earlier attempts to link literature and society. It begins with the generally accepted assumption that thought is conditioned by society, and is unique only in carrying this assumption to its logical conclusion by pointing out that our own thought too is socially conditioned. On this postulate the whole elaborate structure of the sociology of knowledge is based. It claims that there is a large social content in the thought of any individual, and that many ideals and attitudes are absorbed in youth by even the greatest geniuses. This body of ideas is social in origin, and insofar as it was originally designed as a basis for group action, it is a rationalization of the group's interests. Thus the total ideology of the sociology of knowledge does not insinuate that the writer is trying to deceive, but seeks the relationships between certain thought forms and the cultural configurations in which they occur.

But the corollary that our own thought is suspect is what gives the sociology of knowledge its advantage in objectivity. Karl Mannheim goes so far as to point out that only in a time when

<sup>2</sup>E. Zilsel, "Physics and the Problem of Historico-sociological Laws", *PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE*, VIII (Oct., 1941), 569.

<sup>3</sup>P. A. Sorokin, *SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DYNAMICS* (New York, 1937), I, 14-22.

social forces are in such conflict that we are all challenged to examine the usually unconscious basis of our own thought, will the conception of total ideology arise. Indeed, he gets into deep water at this juncture by claiming that since society affects all thought, all knowledge is relative. He has of course been generally attacked for this untenable conclusion. The distinction between empirical and pragmatic truth made by the pragmatists, that between cognitive and non-cognitive knowledge made by the logical positivists, and that between a scientific proposition and an emotive statement made by the semanticists are still valid.<sup>4</sup> That is, the truth of Einstein's general theory of relativity cannot be impugned by reference to the social factors which led him to formulate the problem, nor, as the Nazis claim, by the fact that he is a Jew.

But as Mannheim himself states, and all specialists claim, it is not necessary to accept his epistemology in order to apply his technique, which is the immediate subject of this paper. This process may be subdivided into a number of steps, not all of which need be applied to any one problem. First, select a period for study and pick the problem to be treated, setting up the leading concept and its opposite. Second, on the initial level of imputation analyze all the works involved, trace them to the central common idea, for example, transcendentalism, and produce a structural type which makes the *Weltanschauung* clear. Third, analyze the works and see to what extent they fit the construction. Blends and crossings of viewpoints within each work will be pointed out, and the actual history of the thought style will be charted. Fourth, on the level of sociological imputation, by going behind the *Weltanschauung*, seek to derive the structure and tendencies of thought style from the composition of the groups, classes, generations, occupations, sects, parties, regions, cliques, or schools which express themselves in that mode. Fifth, explain the direc-

<sup>4</sup>Charles Morris, *FOUNDATIONS OF THE THEORY OF SIGNS*, International Encyclopedia of Unified Science, I, No. 2 (Chicago, 1928), 40-41; Robert K. Merton, "Karl Mannheim and the Sociology of Knowledge," *THE JOURNAL OF LIBERAL RELIGION*, II (Winter, 1941), 134. Mannheim believes that objectivity can be achieved by synthesizing the vistas of several ideologies. While the practical value of such perspectives is tremendous, the question whether his epistemological generalizations are cogent still remains. Perhaps they show the effects of the philosophical atmosphere he breathed.

tion of development of the body of thought "through the structural situation and the changes it undergoes" and "through the constantly varying problems raised by the changing structure."

To make this general scheme meaningful it is necessary to explain each step in somewhat greater detail and to fill in some of the rather sketchily outlined steps of the process. Mannheim's formulation of the technique of the sociology of knowledge is designed to hold out the effects of prejudice as long as possible in the research process. A discussion of the constructed type will make this clear.

The first step in the construction of a type, a step which Mannheim does not himself distinguish from the second, is the selection of a concept and its opposite. It may at once be objected that this polarity is too simple, but by going from the general to the specific, later analyses produce all the necessary categories. Thus if one is dealing with transcendentalism, both Puritanism and Unitarianism would have to be adopted as contrasting thought forms and perhaps deism and materialism as well. More damning would be the contention that prejudice, which is to be so carefully excluded, operates at the very outset in the choice of the problem and the leading concepts. But this fact is of no methodological significance. One scholar will choose more fruitful subjects than another and will obtain more significant results, but the conclusions of both, if correctly obtained, will be equally true.

As for the second step, the construction of the type, this can be carried out with perfect objectivity. According to Professor Howard Becker,<sup>5</sup> this construct is not even an hypothesis, but rather an inductively derived heuristic fiction which is theoretically neither true nor false and to which given works will conform no more closely than they do to Professor René Wellek's similarly constructed period or movement.<sup>6</sup> Thus there should be no reason for falsely attributing good or bad characteristics to the type, though some scholars do indeed have this difficulty. In theory their approval or hatred of romanticism should not prevent them from constructing the type objectively or at least hiring

<sup>5</sup>H. E. Barnes and H. and F. B. Becker (editors), *CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THEORY* (New York, 1940), Ch. 2, "Constructive Typology."

<sup>6</sup>"Periods and Movements", in *ENGLISH INSTITUTE ANNUAL*, 1940 (New York 1941), 90-91.

someone else to do it. Once constructed, the type is useful in prediction. Given the type and a certain set of conditions there is at least a statistical likelihood, given the return of the conditions, that the results which held previously will follow. If, as has often been maintained from Aristotle to Bateson, history is interested in the uniqueness of the event, the sociology of knowledge, by trying to see whether configurations recur, shows the broader scope.

The third step of imputation, in which the works of a period are analyzed to see to what extent they actually fit the construction, to note the blends and crossings, and to chart the actual course of an idea, is also designed to produce objective results. Certainly the cross checking is more likely to be accurate than the technique of free, untested hypotheses, illustrated with carefully chosen examples, or of empathetic feeling into a period. By "controlled observation," that is, analysis and resynthesis, the course taken by a concept can be more accurately charted than by general impression.

However useful these three steps may be, it is the fourth, sociological imputation, which is the most distinctive and most significant. At the same time it demands the most thorough elaboration. In the first place Mannheim contends that not only the content, but the very structure of thought may be determined by the historico-social situation of the writer. A number of traits may be subject to this influence: (a) Words or concepts like *liberty* may have different meanings for different groups. (b) The absence of certain concepts may indicate the absence of social drives in that direction. Thus the idea of progress did not arise until the static society of the middle ages had been broken up. (c) Different groups have specially oriented categories. Conservatives are likely to be absolutists conceiving society as an organic, morphological whole; liberals are likely to be relativists and analytic rationalists. (d) Thought models are historico-socially oriented. Pragmatism can arise when the common sense middle class becomes intellectually dominant and respectable. (e) The degree of concreteness and abstractness of a theory may depend upon the social situation. Thus theoretical or moral justifications may cloak materialistic interests. Or an attitude may not be worked out because the contradictions within it would become

apparent, as may have been the case with Emerson's thought.  
(f) An ontology itself is socially conditioned.

Thus it is clear that the place and dignity which authors enjoy in society may influence the nature of their output. Even more important than the group into which an author is born is the group with which he affiliates. This is true because authors tend to become "free" intellectuals, men who through insight and education are able to see through the traditions of their own group, and to ally themselves intellectually with any other sector of society. Certainly the shake-up of values produced by university experience is a widespread phenomenon. The artist too, may break loose from his own group, may become a theorist, like Burke for a superior class, or like Marx for the masses. This new attachment will become more important than the author's origin. Or to put it another way, the type of public to which the author addresses himself will tend to shape his work. The levels of taste in society and the social preconceptions of the various layers will influence the aesthetic and moral aims of the writer who is appealing, consciously or not, to the group view. A study of patronage and emolument systems will cast some light on the unstated assumptions of the authors. Some exploring has already been done, but there are still many blank areas on the map.

The fifth and last step in the process, the development of a body of thought through the structural situation as related to the country as a whole and to the changes in time, involves several points. First the importance of a given group is not the same in all countries. In the nineteenth century, the position of the landed gentry was different in Germany and England, for example.<sup>7</sup> Consequently the position of the group must be worked out before its attitude can be clarified and explained. Next, the relationship between groups is not constant. Thus American history may be taken as the decline of the landed aristocracy, and ultimately of agrarian interests. Finally, even if the balance of interests remains relatively constant, the issues and the ideologies are continually changing. *States rights*, for example, which was once the agrarian doctrine, has now become the slogan of

<sup>7</sup>E. Kohn-Bramstedt, *ARISTOCRACY AND THE MIDDLE CLASSES IN GERMANY* (London, 1937), 10.

the business and financial interests which it was originally intended to forestall.

This outline of the Mannheim technique will strike many as immediately applicable to society, but there may be doubts whether it is applicable to literature, or if applicable, whether it has any real advantages over other types of approach. Admittedly the connections between the social base and the literary superstructure are complex, intricate, and often concealed, while the relations upon the intellectual level are exceptionally strong. Nevertheless the author is a member of society. Certainly the content of prose and poetry, the products of living authors, will be influenced by the author's place in that society. That this is true of the novel is sufficiently obvious, and specific relationships could be multiplied. The author's attitudes, too, are amenable to the same approach. He may be accepting the situation or he may be reacting against it by trying to produce reforms, or by turning aside, like the priest and the levite, to absorb himself in nature, self-contemplation, or art for art's sake.

Once it is seen that this is a valid discipline in the study of literature, it becomes evident that the system has many advantages. In the realm of objectivity, besides offering a controlled procedure, it enables the scholar to bring to light the unarticulated forces operating in the history of thought, and it enables him to expose his own view and to allow for it. In the realm of completeness it is particularly superior. Other social approaches have been applied in a partial and sporadic fashion, but the sociology of knowledge aims at a systematic approach. Furthermore this system includes many factors, since it does not seek to explain all things on the basis of only one cause, but rather emphasizes the interaction between thought and the social structure. It follows the history of an idea in the intellectual realm, but not there alone, and in the social realm, but not there alone; it is the interconnections which are traced. Thus Whitman is developed not solely from Emerson and not solely from society, but from both. In this way the technique avoids the difficulties of economic determinism. On the assumption that the class system will not explain all thought, the sociology of knowledge refines on the older concepts by adding smaller but clearly dis-

tinguishable subdivisions such as generations and regional groups, which are certainly distinct enough in American society. And it escapes the difficulties of economic determinism in another way. Without minimizing the importance of economic factors, it recognizes with the American pragmatists the influence of "theoretical," that is, intellectual factors in producing change, and thus it prevents the question-begging of the crude application of the economic cause.

Furthermore it is useful in many fields of research. It is perhaps most easily applied in biographical studies of individuals to explain why the men thought as they did. For example, the apparent inconsistencies in Dr. Holmes become explicable when he is looked upon as fitting one of the sub-types set up in Veblen's *THEORY OF THE LEISURE CLASS*.

The study of forms is also amenable to this approach. There can be little doubt, for example, that the present cult of poetry which can be understood only with a key is the result of the general attitude that the poet is a dreamer who has nothing to say. Recognizing that the poet as seer is dead, the author intentionally contracts his audience and makes his work precious in order to build up his own dignity\*. Literary scholars should also be encouraged by the success of art historians like Panofsky, Wind, Sorokin, and Shapiro who have charted the changes of forms and imputed them to the philosophies and social situations of the artists. Professor Bateson's contention that poetic types depend upon language may be referred back to the social changes which produced the linguistic changes. I have begun work on the transcendentalists, endeavoring to explain on the basis of this technique why they habitually express themselves in essays, short poems, and occasionally history, rather than in novels or long, dramatic poems. While my conclusions are not ready, it is already gratifying to discover how many fresh approaches are unearthed in the application of this methodology.

In the study of the history of ideas this technique is of major

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\*The problem is more complex than here suggested, not only because various types of obscurity must be isolated, but because obscurity itself must be explained partly by psychological factors, which are not the immediate subject of this paper. Mr. Kenneth Burke's brilliant analyses show how well the social and psychological approaches can be combined.

significance—perhaps of primary significance in the study of those transitional, unstable periods which accompany social change. In American literature, the rise and decline of movements like Puritanism, deism, transcendentalism, humanitarianism, realism, naturalism, imagism, the idea of progress, pre-first-World-War-pessimism, Marxism, the renaissance of metaphysical poetry, the growth of critical schools, the changing rôle of the aristocracy, and the cultural levels of the omnibus middle class—all these urgently need analysis from a social viewpoint.

The sociology of knowledge also aids intellectual history by indicating in what way literature can affect society. As has been pointed out, this system does not claim that all thought is socially determined. Thought patterns are part of the equilibrium of society, and a change of thought can change the entire balance of the equilibrium. Mannheim says that the special realm of this study is the interconnections between thought and society. Certainly there are links on the intellectual plane and one man's thought may influence that of another as Plato's did that of Aristotle. The thought of an individual may also influence that of a group, even to the extent of producing social change. This was true of *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN* and of Montesquieu's doctrine of the separation of powers. Even exaggerated, simplified, or transformed ideas operate. Thus Jefferson was less democratic than his influence, Kant was not understood by the American transcendentalists, nor Hegel by many conscious proletarians. But lest it be thought that other influences are being ruled out, it is suggested that whether one's conception of romantic love is formed by Hemingway or Kathleen Norris depends upon one's own view of what seems suitable and true.

But after all, this methodology provides no panacea. It will not produce laws of causation; it will not be able to explain the temperament of an author; it will not even explain why a work is great literature. That depends upon the author's ability to appeal to a relatively unchanging core of human emotion. Not being universal, this technique cannot because of its grounds claim that other methods are invalid. Whether the approach to literature is individual or social it holds to be a question of method, not principle. The results may not be isomorphic, but when they

are not collaborative or corroborative, they are at least not in conflict. Consequently this approach does not exclude the genetic, nor the historical, nor the aesthetic approach, as Dr. Bergmann and Dr. Spence make clear, but recognizes each of them as valid so far as it goes.<sup>9</sup> Nor will it eliminate the bias of the scholar; it gives him a controlled technique and even a way of recognizing his prejudices, but he is still human and may need forgiveness. There may even be a danger of the technique's leading a scholar into fields which properly belong to sociology, but this consequence is not inevitable or necessary, since the aim is not to produce a sociology of literature, but to use a sociological technique already developed to interpret literature.

To define the limitations of the sociology of knowledge is also to mark off its area of strength. One of its main values is that it offers a guide to the followers of those pioneers who first attacked literature from a particular social viewpoint. If this technique does not make these followers objective, its cross checking may at least prevent them from committing egregious blunders. Furthermore it may open up new insights, not only for those who have used similar techniques before, but also for those who have not. The application of the complete methodology will demand an amazingly thorough examination of all aspects of the problem, some of them newly disclosed, and this is a most exciting feature. Because it emphasizes the links between thought and society, it transcends either purely intellectual or purely social considerations by including them both. But because it cannot explain literary greatness it does not rule out criticism. If the scholar has actually been able to prevent his bias from interfering with his thought while he has been assembling and organizing his material, he feels all the more the desire to act as judge from the position of his own taste and principles. As Professor Harry H. Clark says, it is the duty of the scholar to explain, interpret, and evaluate.<sup>10</sup> But since we must understand what we judge, I suggest that the sociology of knowledge is of great value in performing the first two steps of this process.

<sup>9</sup>G. Bergmann and K. W. Spence, "Operationism and Theory in Psychology," *PSYCHOLOGICAL REVIEW*, XLVIII (Jan., 1941), 3.

<sup>10</sup>"Intellectual History," *ENGLISH INSTITUTE ANNUAL*, 1940 (New York, 1941), 123.

by Hugh W. Sanford

## THE SEARCH OF MAN FOR HIMSELF

**E**VEN the metaphysician has not yet discovered a *rational* place for himself in the world. The characters which man most esteems in himself cannot be primary if the science of physics happens to be correct, and if the physical doctrine of the Conservation of mass and energy is true. Accepting physics, there can remain no important place for Value, Volition, Freedom, Purpose—or for Teleology in general. If all relations are *mechanically* ordained there can be little or no place for a purposefully acting Mind, for life consists then of little more than the experiencing of physical relations—something which mind does not rule. Mind, which then merely *appears* to reason, to value, to both seek and attain, is then to be regarded as a merely secondary reality. It is a product of relations more fundamental than it. It is a disguised result, one which merely *happens* to flow from sequences of strictly mechanical cause and effect which merely *happen* to take place.

Certainly, if the mechanistic premises are correct, the mind can be nothing capable of deflecting the routines of mechanical causation in such fashion as to attain relations in the physical realm that would never have existed if no mind had existed. To believe otherwise is to fob oneself off with irrational imaginings. This is what many Materialists are saying to-day. It must be agreed that they are being logical *if* their mechanistic premises are sound.

As yet, no place for a reconciliation of the opposed principles of Materialism and of subjective Idealism have been found that is satisfactory to a Rationalist who properly apprehends the basic principles of physics, and who accepts them as true and final, and as determining all the dynamic relations of the universe. For a person who accepts physical science as taught to-day there is left no place for progressive Evolution. There is not even a place for a mechanical Evolution that is due to the postulated progressive increase in entropy. There is no place

for significant Change of any variety, or for valuable use of Thought, or for Invention, or even for concepts of any sort. Even less will there be a place for a mental, purposive, and general Cause who might be accomplishing a Plan with the physical aspects of the universe—a Plan that would have rational Value for Mind. If the concept were otherwise, if we surrendered our faith in the scientific axioms, and if we believed, instead, that such a mental Cause really existed, we might, of course, then regard this Cause as being primary to the relative motions, and consequent relations, of the physical particles which the physicists chart in arriving at their formulations of the gross and statistically averaged aspects of their operational experiences.

The search of man for a significant place in the universe for Rationality, for Free Will, for a significant general Mind, and for Minds purposive accomplishments in attaining relations values of some mental significance in the very heart of "the physical", has lasted long indeed. For thousands of years man has been searching to disclose, unquestionably, the influence of a mental Character in the world at large—of a Character akin to that which man believes he possesses himself, and which, he believes, makes him superior in quality and higher in degree to a mere stone.

At least 1,500 years before Christ (and perhaps 15,000 years), such problems were considered in the Vedic hymns of ancient India. Long before the early Greek philosophers of record, the principles of Idealism, Materialism, Realism, Rationalism, etc., had been analyzed in the *Upanishads* of the Hindus and the principles weighed in the various systems of Indian philosophy that arose therefrom. In the doctrines of the Jains, and of *Samkhya*, and of those persons who founded the *Nyaya* and *Vaisheshika*s philosophies, and in the materialistic Hindu philosophies such as the Charvaka, in its various stages, philosophies which mostly originated prior to 500 B. C.,—and even in the earlier forms of Buddhism,—these problems concerning the place of Mind, or Spirit, in the world and in man were examined at length and twisted and turned dialectically. It was later that Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle, all of whom, no doubt, were acquainted with the philosophies of ancient India, strove vigorously but inconclusively to set up a conceivable and consistent philo-

sophy which would embrace all that *seemed* to be, and which could and would yet give a rational place for the existence of distinct mental and physical characters.

Plotinus, and many of the mystics who followed him, more or less adopted certain of the esoteric theories of ancient India. In the Middle Ages, Abelard, Albert Magnus, Saint Thomas of Aquin, and others, similarly to Plotinus, largely neglected physical theory, and, following their psychic intuitions which came to them from unknown sources, they forcefully expressed their operationally unsupported ideas and convictions. Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, Kant, Berkeley, Spinoza, Bergson, Bradley, Bosanquet, Royce and numerous others were Idealists who largely neglected physical theory. Of course the strictly scientific man, who, since Galileo and Francis Bacon, relies almost solely upon operational experiences for his accepted truths, has paid little attention to these "metaphysical ravings". It must be remembered that in the nineteenth century the physicists had more or less agreed on their "laws", but that, in contrast, no two of the metaphysicians proposed the same doctrine. The scientists therefore concluded that these *wordy* theories of the metaphysicians were merely fanciful flights of the imagination above the solid earth. In the blue void of the ether a person may sight his course according to his unrestrained fancy, and in any one of innumerable directions. The scientist did not then realize how unjustified was their own belief in the universal and final accuracy of their own principles.

Pascal grieved deeply that God had left no trace of Himself in the world he could discover. Perhaps Pascal was too blind to perceive what was all the time before him. In searching for himself, Pascal could not find any trace of Mind or Spirit active in the universe at large. Yet, these were the characters that Pascal most valued in himself and that he most wished to see enthroned in the external world. How else could he justify his own quality on any important scale—if at all.

Nor could Sir Isaac Newton find anything taking place in the physical world, at large or close by, that gave even a hint of the "omnipresence of God". Every grain of dust, Newton said, moves in strict accord with the principle of Mechanical Determinism. That is to say, it moves according to the rigid laws of Conservation, and strictly on the basis of *mechanical* effect being equal to

the *mechanical* cause. Surely, in such a routine there is no place for the purposive accomplishment of Free Spirit. Indeed, Newton could not find himself *in* physical Nature; he really found no place for himself *outside* of physical Nature. Even so, Newton, like Kepler, preferred to believe that a Spirit urged the solar planets in their orbits rather than to think that mechanical forces "acted-at-a-distance" from sun to planets to cause these curving paths.

It is fairly apparent that the metaphysicians of the past have known too little about mathematics and physics to criticize pertinently either the methods or the conclusions of the physicists. Furthermore, after the philosopher has accepted the basal premises of physics his hands are thereafter firmly tied. Thereafter, if he be consistently and competently rationalistic, he cannot be an Idealist or a Teleologist. His search for a place for his believed-in higher self is then impassably blocked.

But what, after all, if it so happens that the science of physics is itself irrational, incomplete, incorrect, and not explainable in terms of itself? What if the physical principles are secondary? What if they are too grossly based, and the reverse of the unitary principles which, alone, are primary and truly significant? What if they have no suitable relevance for the person who wishes to understand the *ultimate* bases of things, who is trying to reach to the true sources of the generalized relations to which the "laws" of physics are exclusively devoted? If these are the facts concerning physics, then, obviously, the philosophers who, merely because he *thinks* it is the rational thing to do, forces his theory to conform with the tenets of physics, is sure to be building upon an unstable, and upon what is really irrational, foundation.

The philosophers of the past do not seem to have realized sufficiently what Professor A. N. Whitehead of Harvard University now stresses—namely, that physical theory has been guilty of the serious "Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness", and of the error of "Simple Location". That is to say, the physicists have incorrectly attempted to explain the dynamic relations encountered in certain specific portions of space as though these volumes could be completely isolated dynamically from the influences of other portions of the universe, and isolated so completely that their individual dynamic relations *may* and *must* be explained in terms

of forces inherent to themselves. Principles thus derived, says Whitehead, cannot possibly be precisely true or of fundamental significance. The physicists, he says, have indulged in unjustified mental abstractions. They have *thought* more abstractly than things really *are*. Whitehead argues that neither the persisting motions of the material particles nor the general and local limitations of such motions may be explained in these terms.

Whitehead believes that the "lure" for the achievement of an ever more perfect æsthetic harmony—an emotional characteristic and urge that are possessed by all things organic and inorganic—is the Power behind Motion. This "lure" is also the Principle of Concretion, or of the general Cohesion from which the local cohesions derive. Except for this "lure", or emotional urge, to achieve greater Values in this realm of æsthetic harmony, Whitehead thinks, there would be no moving physical particles, and hence no general relations, or laws of relations, for the physicists to worry about and to misconceive. Whitehead fortifies his metaphysics with a trenchant criticism of physics. Whitehead is not only a great philosopher but he is also a learned mathematician and physicist. In this respect he is somewhat unique.

Now, my studies have made me feel the Mechanical Determinism remains in full force in Relativity physics. I also find there the fallacy of "Misplaced Concreteness",—although perhaps not to the same extent as in Newtonian physics. I also find there the false notion that principles which may aptly refer to the gross, composite relations of physical particles must necessarily possess some primal significance. Relativity physics, furthermore, is admittedly limited to *operational* findings, and these necessarily involve merely the statistical averages of gross dynamic relations. Although Einstein states that he limits his physics to operationally proved facts, the truth is that its major principles are mere deductions from unproved premises. Perhaps his most important premise is that the space between the sun and earth is empty of "rest-mass". If this premise is untrue his entire theory collapses. Yet this so-called truth has never been demonstrated by empirical experience. It is merely a *deduction* from the nature of the orbits of the sun's planets. It is *assumed* (hypothesis) and perhaps

without warrant, that this is the only explanation of the motions of the planets.

Furthermore, another basis of the Special Theory of Relativity is Einstein's so-called proof of the doctrine of the "Relativity of Simultaneity." If this doctrine is untrue the whole edifice of Relativity collapses. Yet, the proof offered by Einstein—the proof involving a train, and embankment, and light flashes—is entirely *hypothetically* operational. The experiment was never carried out actually, and, according to some minds, if it *were* carried out the results would be found to be different from those imagined by Einstein. Indeed, the Relativity Theories, as I view them contain more false premises, more fallacious and unwarranted deductions, and, hence, more incorrect formulations, than Newtonian physics. Furthermore, if my analysis is correct, both physics are extremely vulnerable.

Another point should be stressed: The "Theory of Uncertainty" advanced by Heisenberg, and set forth in almost the same terms by Democritus, does not justify the idealistic philosopher in believing that the individual electron acts on the basis of free-will, and that this corpuscle may act deliberately *in order to* accomplish mentally realized and purposefully sought-for values. No legitimate support of subjective Idealism or of objective Idealism is to be found in the doctrine of Heisenberg. No place in Nature for Mind or Spirit is located for searching man by Heisenberg. Indeed, the implications of what seems to happen in the realm of the individually imperceptible physical particles, as these behaviors may be judged from analysis of the gross statistics of composite events, are that the strictly *mechanical* sequence may be depended upon to obtain in the individual relations of the unitary and "completely elastic" material particles. At least this would seem to be the truth if one is willing to overlook the necessity of locating the source of the "elasticity" which these particles unflinchingly possess, and which is used eternally to cause acceleration in undrainable and inexhaustible supply of "force". There is no Conservation of Force in the unitary event. Just the opposite.

Limitations of space prevent me from pointing out these parts of physical theory which are most vulnerable to a rational attack, May it suffice to say that there are many, and that even the major

premises of physics are unsound. It is worthy of note, too, that the new theories of Einstein really deny the possibility of such a being as Einstein—of a being who might be capable of composing his Theories. Certainly a physics that leads to such fantastic conclusions cannot possibly have any fundamental reference.

The pressing duty of the present-day philosopher is that of giving present-day physical theory a thorough and adequate criticism. To do this, the critic must understand the basic principles of physics and the premises from which they were deduced. When this has been done, I believe that the limitations and weaknesses of physical science will be clearly revealed to him. Then, when thus disclosed, the weaknesses of this science should be set forth by this philosopher so clearly and finally that the practical physicist, the usual unimaginative scientific plodder who revels in operational experiences with the gross, and who analyzes scarcely at all, will be forced to realize the purely secondary statue of his practical science. Then, in order to perfect the science, and to make it sound rationally (as well as appropriate for use in the realm of the imperceptibly small), it should be revamped to conform with these new understandings.

A new metaphysics may then be built, I am sure, which will conform with the tenets of the *new* physics. I believe that logical places for Free-will, Value, Purpose, Emotion—the characters of man in a mild degree—will then be revealed. And Progressive Change of a type that acts negatively on "the physical" and positively on "the mental" will then be understood. Furthermore, since this Change, as all Change, is purely *relational*, the Cause of motions and limitations of motions (cohesion) will then be attributed to a high Principle, or Creative Cause, which transcends the dynamic relations of the physical, and which even creates these relations and the average progressive Change in them. In this philosophy even the mechanistic principles and relations, so far as they are correctly sized up, will have a rational place.

At this stage, the purposive Plan of the universe should be somewhat realized. Man will then be able to predict his Future because he will then understand the nature of the rational Plan that is being purposively carried out. Knowing the end in view, man can understand the means employed to achieve it. More

than this, he can then adapt himself better to harmonize with the Plan and the Change.

Man will then realize, too, that the Creative Cause—pure Mind or Spirit perhaps—is not omnipotent except *in Time*. The place of Time in the scheme of things will then be understood. And, because significant Accomplishment calls for significant Change, and because Change calls for the application of unbalanced Force,—namely, for Force destroying the harmony of the preceding Order and Balance,—and because the renewed destructions of earlier conditions of Balance call for the appearance of unusual strains and stresses in the æsthetic relations of things, the reason for the presence of Pain-Symbols (mentally qualitative symbols) in the world will then be revealed to man.

When man is possessed of this knowledge, the problem of Evil will no longer exist. The pains, the necessary accompaniments of significant accomplishment in man's humble stage of development, will no more be regretted than the pain of falling is regretted by the boy deliberately intent on acquiring the accomplishment of skating on ice. The pain will be offset and cancelled by the æsthetic anticipation.

Indeed, understanding of *what* is happening, and especially of *why* it is happening, and of *why* it is happening in the *way* it is happening and *must* happen in light of the rational Plan, and for the sake of the planned higher Values to be accomplished by a Creative Causes requiring Time, and Change in Time, to work His ends in the world, should so alter man's psychological attitude towards the so-called pains of life that he must endure in these early stages of his mental development, that a new measure of Happiness will be vouchsafed to him. Nor Evil, but Good, will be perceived in the transient pains of development.

When man has achieved this understanding he will have recognized and proved the nature of his own soul. He will then have identified his own higher reality with that of the Supreme Spirit which is driving the stars in their courses, and which is ordaining and doing all things with the physical world in order to promote the attainment of spiritual Values—Values which are to be achieved only through a Change of relations. This fact that spiritual values may be derived from changes in the relations of

"the physical" is itself evidence that "the physical" is but a certain form of relation of "the spiritual". It is the relationship of "the physical" that may be transformed for the glory and joy of the Spirit, and by its Power. It is this Change that gives the world of mechanical relations its supreme significance in the secondary realm of mere potentiality. At this stage, man, who will then understand the secondary nature and place of "the physical", and the true significance of the dynamic relations of the world, will realize that the mind and spirit in himself is almost everything of fundamental importance in himself and in the universe. But, when man has come to the stage of realizing this, and when he has thus proved the kinship between himself and the Creative Spirit which, to-day drives the universe, the Search of Man for Himself will be ended.

*by Pushkin*

POEMS OF ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

Translations from the Russian

by Eugene Mark Kayden

*"A Sower Went Out to Sow His Seed"*

A lonely sower in freedom's name  
I walked before the morning star;  
And pure of heart, with faithful hand  
The living seed I scattered far  
Where bondmen toil upon the land  
By ancient force. Alas, my aim  
And work unselfish—all in vain. . . .

Graze in your peace, complacent nations!  
Your fate is to be shorn or slain.  
Not freedom! no, your partnership,  
From sire to sire, in generations,  
'The yoke, the cowbells, and the whip.

1823

*The Desire for Fame*

When in my tender love and exaltation,  
I knelt before you, still with adoration,  
And gazed at you, believing you were mine,  
You knew, my Sweet, I did not truly pine  
For fame. You knew unmoved by adulation,  
And bored by vain poetic reputation  
And old disputes, unmindful I became  
Of buzzing sounds of praise and cries of blame.  
How weak their views and hearsay when beside

You dreaming in the waning eventide,  
Your fingers quiet in my hair, I hear  
You whisper: Tell me, are you happy, dear?  
You love me? Will you love eternally,  
My own—remember, always, only me?  
Then I, in breathless silence, overcome  
By happiness, believed the living hum  
Of hours had ended, and no more the pain  
Of parting in the world. . . . My dream was vain!  
Tears, grief, unfaith, great calumny, and strife  
My only lot. . . . What am I, what my life?  
I stand, a lonely man, by stormy skies  
Surprised, a desert darkness in my eyes!  
To-day I know the burning thirst for fame:  
To-day I ask that every hour my name  
Resound upon your ears, the shouting throng  
Cry loud and cheer my name emblazed in song,  
Till in the calm of night you hear again  
The vows I gave in faith, my deepest pain  
Remember, my entreaties broken-hearted,  
The night, the garden tree, the hour we parted.  
1825

*To A. P. Kern*

I dream our brief and wondrous meeting  
When you appeared to me in light:  
I saw you as a vision fleeting,  
A form of beauty and delight.

Forlorn in loneliness and sadness,  
I walked with care and fear, apart;  
I heard your tender voice of gladness,  
I held your beauty in my heart.

Years fled by. In wild surrender  
I scattered far those dreams of mine,  
And I forgot your accents tender,  
Your loveliness, your air divine.

In exile, gloom, and desolation  
Moved quietly my weary years—  
Without belief or inspiration,  
And without life or love or tears.

I rose anew, with song and greeting,  
And you again appeared in light:  
I saw you as a vision fleeting,  
A form of beauty and delight.

My heart is high with adoration,  
And quicker in my being move  
Belief again, and inspiration,  
And life again, and tears, and love.

1825

### *Winter Evening*

Storms enfold the sky with darkness,  
Whirling snows upon the gale,  
Now like frightful creatures howling,  
Now the winds like children wail;  
Now they whistle in the rushes,  
Now around the porch again,  
And like travellers belated  
Rap upon the window-pane.

Gloom lies folded in the corners  
Of our cottage sad and still.  
Why so quiet, granny, darling,  
Lonely by the window-sill?  
Are you faint with daylong hearing  
Winter's dreary wail of song?  
Is your head with humming weary,  
Spinning at the wheel night-long?

Let us drink, my darling granny,  
Friend of my lone youth and drear!  
Let us, darling, drink for sorrow!

Wine will fill our hearts with cheer.  
Sing to me about the pigeon,  
How she lived beyond the sea;  
Sing about the maid at dawning,  
By the well, across the lea.

Storms enfold the sky with darkness,  
Whirling snows upon the gale,  
Now like frightful creatures howling,  
Now the winds like children wail.  
Let us drink, my darling granny,  
Friend of my lone youth and drear!  
Let us, darling, drink for sorrow!  
Wine will fill our hearts with cheer.

1825

*Beneath Her Native Sky of Blue*

Beneath her native sky of blue, afar, she drooped  
And wasted dreamingly away. . . .  
She died; in likelihood her shade that very hour  
Hovered above me in dismay.  
And now an abyss divides me from her shadowy  
Existence, but in vain I yearn  
To weep her loss; from strange and unconcerned lips  
I hear her death with unconcern.  
And this was she whom once I loved with all my heart  
Aflame! with all my stormy force,  
With wondrous tenderness, with rapture of the soul,  
With mad distraction and remorse!  
Now where my anguish? where my love? Alas, my Best,  
My trustful shade who was so dear,  
For past sweet memories of unreturning days,  
I cannot grieve or shed a tear.

1826

*The Prophet*

Athirst in soul for truth and grace  
In desert gloom I walked alone,  
And there a six-wingèd seraph shone  
Upon the night before my face.  
He touched my eyes with fingers light  
And soft as sleep at eventide;  
My eyes became with vision wide,  
Alarmed as eagles in the night.  
He touched my ears, I heard around  
Me far and wide a tide of sound:  
I heard a trembling fill the sky,  
I heard the angel wings on high,  
I heard the sap in grass and trees,  
And reptiles moving 'neath the seas.  
He leaned above my mouth awhile,  
And tore from me my tongue of guile,  
And took from me my pride and lust,  
And with his bloody hand he thrust  
Between my dead lips withering  
The serpent's sharp and subtle sting.  
And with his sword he clove my breast,  
And plucked the heart that trembled there,  
And in my bosom rived and bare  
A coal of living fire he pressed.  
I fell upon the waste as dead.  
And God spake unto me and said:  
"Arise, O prophet! Hear and see!  
Fulfill my will! Go forth again,  
And, wayfaring, on land, on sea,  
Burn with my words the hearts of men!"

1826

*The Winter Road*

In a sky of mist and shadows  
Glides the moon serene and bright;  
Over melancholy meadows  
Flows her melancholy light.

Swift the team of horses flying  
Through the snow's infinity,  
And in monotone, soft sighing,  
Sleigh-bells tinkle wearily.

Long I hear the driver drawling  
Olden melodies and plain,—  
Now a song of joy recalling,  
Now a song of honest pain. . . .

Snow and silence. Not a lonely  
Light or peasant cottage near.  
Slowly pass the mileposts only  
On the plain so vast and drear.

I am sad and weary. . . . Bide you,  
Nina, one more long lone day,  
By the open fire beside you  
I will dream the night away.

When the clock in measure sighing  
Rings the hour of waning night,  
We will watch the embers dying,  
Side by side, nor bid goodnight.

Sad my soul; the way is weary,  
And my driver nods at last.  
Sleigh-bells tinkle lone and dreary;  
Now the moon is overcast.

1826

### *The Rose of Cythera*

Upon this earth a wondrous rose  
Before amazed Cytherea blows,  
A rose than roses lovelier,  
Than votive myrtle and the myrrh.

The snows of winter fall in vain  
On Cythera and Paphos plain:  
Among brief roses of a day,  
One rose will never fade away.

1827

*Remembrance*

When the loud tumult of the day is hushed, and deep  
Upon the voiceless city wall  
The half-transparent shadows lie, and quiet sleep  
Rewards man's toil at evenfall,  
Then in the weary languidness of silent night  
Drag slow my hours of woe and smart:  
At that inactive season fierce reproaches smite  
With serpent fang my contrite heart;  
My burning mind is overwhelmed with great excess  
Of sorrow, anguish sweeps the soul,  
And memory unrolls in silence merciless  
Of tallied wrongs her doleful scroll.  
And desolate I read the record of my years,  
I curse, I tremble with dismay,  
And bitterly I grieve, and bitterly shed tears,  
But cannot wash a line away.

1828

*On My Birthday*

Gift of chance, a favor aimless,  
Why the gift of life to me?  
By what law divine or nameless  
Doomed in dark infinity?

Who, and why, without compassion  
Called me out of nothingness?  
Filled my soul with doubt and passion,  
Wasted me with loneliness?

All my ways are dim and dreary;  
Vain the mind, the heart is bare;  
Days monotonous and weary  
Trouble me with dull despair.

1828

*Foreboding*

Tempest-clouds above me gather  
In the secret, waiting gloom;  
Woe again, and dark misfortune,  
Hang above my head like doom. . . .  
Will I mock at fate, disdainful?  
Will I, calmly, as of old  
In my youth I strove, in patience,  
Strive with resolution bold?

I am worn with tribulation,  
And await, unmoved, the blow:  
I may find perhaps a refuge  
And deliverance from woe. . . .  
But the dreadful hour foreboding  
We by destiny must part,  
For the final time, O dearest,  
Let me hold you to my heart.

Dearest, angel of compassion,  
Whisper soft, say fare-you-well!  
Let your tender eyes and tearful  
All my anguish now dispel;  
That our parting long remembered  
Be my comfort evermore  
For the fame and hopes denied me,  
For my youth denied once more.  
1828

*The Upas Tree*

Far on a desert dread and barren,  
On sun-baked ground, the Upas tree  
Stands lonely like a ghastly sentry,  
Lone in the world's immensity.

The boundless, lean and thirsting desert  
Conceived it on a day of wrath,  
And suckled every root with venom,  
And filled each livid leaf with death.

Adown the bark the venom oozes  
Drop by drop 'neath the blazing sky,  
And curdles in the chill of evening  
Into 'a resin clear and dry.

No tiger haunts, no bird flies over  
This tree of death. Day after day  
The black winds blow, and, pestilential,  
They rush tumultuously away.

And if by chance a cloud will wander  
With rain above the drooping tree,  
On burning sands the venom'd rain-drops  
Fall from the branches mournfully.

But with a nod into the desert  
Man sent his fellow-man away,  
And forth he ran, the slave submissive,  
To bring the resin at break of day.

He bore with him the evil burden,  
He bore the deadly leaf and bough;  
Within his ashen face a terror,  
The cold sweat trembled on his brow.

He sank upon the matted rushes  
Beneath the tent, sick with the sting  
Of death, and thus the wretched slave-man  
Died unto his lord and king.

The king then dipped in reeking venom  
His many shafts of war, and dread  
Destruction far among his neighbors,  
In every foreign land, he spread.

*The Multitude**O procul este, profani!*

The poet swept a trembling hand  
Across his consecrated lyre.  
He sang; the unhallowed of the land  
Beheld him, dead unto his fire.

And thus declared the babbling throng:  
"What purpose in his tuneful song  
Resounding in the empty air?  
What is his message? what his aim?  
About what cause his grief and care?  
Enchanter fanciful, his flame  
And song torment the heart with pain.  
Free as the wind his verses flow,  
And aimless as the wind they blow.  
What is their use, and where the gain?"

"Be silent, lost to shame and sense,  
You hirelings, slaves of want and care!  
I loathe your hateful impudence!  
Gain, gain alone your daily share;  
In pounds you calculate and weigh  
Apollo Belvidere—but clay  
He is to you, and something odd,  
The marble shining like a god.  
Ah, well! An earthen pot for stew  
More useful is indeed to you."

"Nay, if you come of God, reveal  
To us your message, poet, impart  
Your talents to the common weal,  
Correct and guide the human heart.  
We are unscrupulous and hateful,  
We are unlovely, gross, ungrateful;  
We harbor sin, corruption, shame;  
We are insensible to fame,  
To beauty, fellowship, and ruth.

O poet, tell us what to do,  
Instruct us in the ways of truth,  
And we will hearken unto you."

"Begone! What common bond between  
The poet's calm of unity  
And all your purposes unclean?  
My voice of love and harmony  
Is dead to hearts as dark as graves.  
Enough for you, O wanton slaves,  
The scourge, the block, the prison-cage,  
To please your folly and your rage!  
Enough—your sweepers sweep the dirt  
Of mart and street; and, true, their toil  
Is useful: But shall your priests desert  
The altar, high sacrifice, and oil?  
Not for rewards and agitation,  
For worldly gain and strife and care;  
We live apart for inspiration,  
For harmony divine and prayer."

1828

### *Wonderland*

(Prologue to "*Ruslan and Liudmila*")

Beside a sea a green oak grows,  
A golden chain around the tree:  
All day and night wise tomcat goes  
Along the chain, around the tree.  
He walks to right—he hums a lay;  
He walks to left—a fairy tale.

A magic land! There mermaids play  
Within the trees; there demons wail;  
There horrid shapes of beasts appear  
On paths unknown; there, dim and drear,  
On hen-feet stands a witch's hut  
Without a blind or door to shut;  
There vales are all aglow with sprites

And wonders; there upon the sand  
At dawn a wave brings in a band  
Of thirty brave and gallant knights  
Arisen from their foamy bed,  
A leader-uncle at their head;  
There a young prince in single fight  
Enslaves a king; above the sea,  
Above the wood, triumphantly  
A wizard carries off a knight;  
There grieves a princess in a cave,  
Where greywolf guards her like a slave;  
There rat-a-tat a mortar flits,  
And witch Yagáh within it sits;  
There king Koshchéy lies wasting o'er  
His bags of gold, and counts his store.  
My Russia, this! The plain, the air,  
The smell of home is everywhere.  
I saw the oak beside that shore,  
Where once I drank of mead and brew  
And heard wise tom his wonders tell.  
One story I remember well,  
Which I shall now relate to you.

1828

*I Loved You*

I loved you; and perhaps my love of you  
Still glows as warm within my heart in vain,  
But let my love not grieve you, dear, I do  
Not want to bring you suffering again.  
I loved you true; in silence, hopelessly,  
Now faint with awe, then jealous fear anew,  
With all my heart I loved you tenderly,—  
God grant another's love may be as true.

1829

*When I Stroll Down the Street*

When I stroll down the noisy street,  
Or stand before the crowded shrine,  
Or when with friends I gaily meet,  
I dream the selfsame dreams of mine.

I muse how brief beneath the sun  
Our living hours of joy and light;  
A little while, and one by one,  
Too soon we pass into the night.

I gaze the lone, green oak, and say,  
This noble patriarch in his prime  
Will long outlive my own decay,  
As he outlived my father's time.

And if in gladness I embrace  
A child, instinctively I sigh,  
Content to let him have my place  
To grow to manhood; I must die.

The changing years and changing days  
With probing thoughts I apprehend,  
And hope to know among their ways  
The secret of my coming end.

Where, in what manner will I die?  
In war, in travel, on the deep?  
Or will a little plot close by  
Soon shelter my eternal sleep?

And though I know my poor remains  
Shall rot, no matter where I die,  
Let me be buried on the plains  
At home, beneath my native sky.

I pray that round my silent tomb  
Young joyous life may freely play,  
And earth imperishable bloom  
Year after year with beauty gay.

*Lines to the Poet*

O Poet, believe not in the crowd's acclaim.  
Soon pass the noontide ecstasies of praise;  
The mob will mock you, fools their judgment raise,  
But live, unmoved, above their storm and blame,  
A quiet king: Shine, Poet, in your fame!  
Go, free, in fearlessness, your splendid ways,  
Attaining mastery of thought and phrase,  
And for unselfish work no payment claim.

The world has none to give. O highest judge,  
And stern tribunal of your aim and work,  
Are you content? Exacting craftsman, say,  
Is art enough? Then let the vulgar grudge,  
Curse, spit upon your altar flame, and jerk  
The tripod in their wayward childish play.

1830

*Madonna*

With many paintings great and old I ne'er  
Have wished to decorate my poor retreat,  
That critics may with solemn judgment treat  
Each line and shade, and friends in wonder stare.  
But in my home, from labor slow and care,  
One canvas I forever yearn to meet,  
One vision only from the thronèd seat  
Of heaven,—the Holy Child and Virgin fair.

She great in mercy, He with wisdom bright,  
Mother and Child in quiet majesty,  
Alone, without adoring cherubs, shine  
Beneath the palm of Zion in my sight.  
Madonna, mine! I praise my God for thee,  
Divinest form of beauty most divine.

1830

*Elegy*

Like fumes of wine and songs of maudlin night,  
The memories of mirth and wild delight  
Are whelming me, and sorrows past, like wine  
Grown old, grow sharper as my days decline.  
My way is bleak; upon the troubled sea  
Of life there's only toil and grief for me.

But, no, my friends, I do not ask to die!  
I want to live, to think, to suffer, sigh.  
I know that I shall taste of happiness  
Despite the grief, the anguish and distress;  
That moved to happy tears by dreams of mine  
I will lose myself in poetry divine;  
And, haply, at my death, for one brief while  
Fair Love may smile at me her farewell smile

1830

*Sleep Has Left Me*

Sleep has left me; dark the room;  
All around me weary slumber;  
Slow the dreary tickings number  
Creeping minutes in the gloom.  
Parca's whisperings uncertain,  
Stillness rustling in the curtain,  
Memories on micelike feet,  
Grieve my spirit in defeat. . . .  
Does the darkness cry my shame,  
Murmuring a living blame,  
Dooming me to greater woe?  
Do the voices warn of hate,  
Call to me, or bode ill fate?  
Speak, your meaning I would know. . . .

1830

*When You Were Leaving Me*

When you were leaving me, departing  
For home again, beyond the sea,  
That moment blindest, unforgotten,  
I wept before you brokenly.  
I tried to hold you from your going,  
My hands more desolate, more dead;  
I moaned, entreating, not to sunder  
The anguish of that hour of dread.

But from my tears and last embraces  
With one last kiss you turned away;  
You called me from my gloomy exile  
Far to your land of splendid day.  
You promised: In the cool of olive,  
Beside a sea, the blue above,  
We soon shall joy again together  
United in the kiss of love.

Alas! beneath your sky of azure,  
Where in the bars the shining sea  
Rolls dreamily, in cool of olive  
Shadows, you sleep eternally.  
Your ardent beauty and your sorrows  
In death are vanished; vanished, too,  
The kiss of meeting. . . . But, Love, I wait;  
You promised me, you swore it true. . . .  
1830

*The Echo*

When beasts roar in the forest lair,  
Or thunders boom, or trumpets blare,  
Or a maiden sings of joy or care,  
Your swift reply  
Through regions of the empty air  
Goes ringing high.

You answer to the horn and squall,  
The roar of seas on headland wall,  
The shepherd's tune at evenfall,  
But you remain  
Alone. . . . Unanswered, too, you call,  
O Poet, in vain.

1830

*Let Me Not Lose My Mind*

Oh, God, let me not lose my mind!  
Better in thirst, in hunger, blind,  
To pick my way from mart  
To mart. Not that I prize my wit  
Or mind so greatly, that with it  
I am too loath to part.

If they would only let me be!  
How glad their cities I would flee  
Where wide the forest gleams!  
There with my burning ecstasies,  
I would lose myself in reveries,  
Alone with wondrous dreams.

I would be glad to hear the song  
Of seas, I would rejoice daylong  
To watch the empty sky.  
Then free and fearless I would rove,  
Strong as the wind in ringing grove  
And forest I would fly.

But there is the hurt: If out of mind,  
They'll fear me as the plague, and bind  
And clap me in a cage.  
And then the crowds will come to stare  
At me, a fool in prison there,  
And tease me to a rage.

I shall not hear the skylark sing,  
The whisper of the leaves in spring,  
I shall not hear the rain;  
But day and night the shriek of mates,  
The warden's curse, the muffled hates,  
The clang of iron chain.

1833

### *The Cloud*

O lonely last cloud of the vanishing thunder!  
Alone in the radiant heavens you wander,  
Alone you are sailing in gloomy array,  
And darken the joy and the triumph of day.

But lately with blackness the heavens you covered,  
And lightnings around and above you have hovered;  
The voice of your thunder was loud on the plain,  
And thirsting, the earth drank her fill of the rain.

Enough—now leave us, your might is defeated;  
The fields are refreshed, the storm has retreated;  
In a murmur of leaves the winds now arise  
And drive you afar from the calm of the skies.

1835

### *Secular Power*

(After seeing "The Crucifixion" by Briulov)

And when the highest triumph of the day transpired,  
And, crucified, our Lord upon the Cross expired,  
On either side the Tree Immortal stood and grieved  
The Virgin Mother and Mary Magdalene. Bereaved,  
Two women, still, they stood,  
With nameless sorrow in their hearts beneath the rood.  
To-day, as though before a potentate's front door,  
No mourners watch, no holy women Him adore,  
But two tall sentinels in stiff attention stand,  
In shakos, with their bayonetted guns in hand.  
I say, for what effect this military guard?

And why this Crucifixion now the State's regard,  
Like goods in custody from thieves and underlings?  
Do you believe you honor thus the King of kings?  
Do you believe your haughty patronage adorns  
Our Lord and Saviour crowned with a crown of thorns,  
The Christ who gave in love His body sweet and dear  
And suffered for all men the scourge, the nails, the spear?  
Or do you fear they give offense—the publican  
And poor—to Him, who by His death delivered man?  
And so, to please the gentry strolling here about,  
You ruled to keep the lowly common people out?  
1836

*I Value Not Too High*

I value not too high the rights men loudly blare  
Abroad, from which their heads go round. I do not share  
Their mighty anger that I am denied the pleasure  
Of arguing against each levied tax or measure,  
Or hindering when king decides to war with king;  
I little care how low the press its dupes may bring,  
Or whether oft the censorship be quick and clever  
To curb the wag and journalist in their endeavor.  
Words, words! their words ring vain and hollow in my ear!  
I have regard for higher rights, more full and clear;  
A nobler freedom in my vision I behold:  
What matters it to me who's ruler—as of old  
A sovereign monarch, or the people? . . . But oh to live  
In freedom always, and be myself alone; to give  
My honor unto none, nor like a flunkey cower  
In conscience and in thought before a worldly power;  
To walk in solitude with fancy here and there;  
To feel the wonder of the sky and earth and air;  
To tremble joyously in blissful adoration  
Before the master works of art and inspiration—  
My happiness! My rights!

1836

*When Deep in Thought I Rove*

When, deep in thought, I rove beyond the city  
And come into the public burial-grounds—  
The railings, posts, and ornamented tombs  
Where the great capital's long-buried dead  
Are rotting, crowded in the swampy acres,  
Like greedy guests about a beggar's board;  
The mausoleums of tradesmen and officials,  
The curious statues carved by bungling hands  
And graved in prose and verse with virtues, rank,  
And faithful works in life; the ponderous tombs  
Above some profligates or cuckolds dead;  
The urns that have been twisted from their posts  
By plunderers; the muddy open graves  
Wide-gaping for new tenants on the morrow,—  
The scene around me stirs such pain and loathing,  
I grow so troubled in my mind with hatred,  
I want to curse and run.

But how I love  
To rove in autumn, in the evening silence,  
Into my native village churchyard, where  
The lowly lie dreaming in majestic peace.  
Here, unadorned, the graves have ample place;  
Nor creep the plunderers within the darkness;  
A villager at times will pass the aged,  
Moss-covered stones, with prayer, with a sigh;  
Rather than urns and petty pyramids,  
Or noseless angels and disheveled Graces,  
Alone the great oak broods above the graves  
And murmurs wide with sound.

1836

*Exegi Monumentum*

I raised myself a monument not made with hands;  
From every side the people's ways will lead to me;  
Higher than Tsar Alexander's shaft of marble, stands  
My monument, unbowed and free.

I shall not pass away. My soul will live fore'er  
In hallowed verse, when I am clay, unperishing,  
And glory mine while underneath the enfolding air  
One poet yet remains to sing.

The tidings of my fame will spread throughout the land,  
And every native race will speak my name with pride,  
The noble Slav, the Tungus of the nomad band,  
The Finn beside the sounding tide.

And long the common folk will love to honor me,  
Because my lyric song their kindly feelings woke,  
Because, in a cruel age, I sang of liberty,  
And mercy for the fallen spoke.

Fulfill, O Muse, the will of Heaven! Among mankind  
Uncrowned and apart, fear not man's abuse and rule;  
Hear praise and blame, unmoved, with an impartial mind,  
And gladly suffer every fool.

1836

## SHAKESPEARE, WITH AND WITHOUT TEARS

THE CHARACTER OF HAMLET. By John Erskine Hankins. 257 pp. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1941.

SHAKESPEARE'S AUDIENCE. By Alfred Harbage. 190 pp. Columbia University Press, New York, 1941.

SHAKESPEARE AND DEMOCRACY. By Alwin Thaler. 297 pp. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 1941.

SHAKESPEARE WITHOUT TEARS. By Margaret Webster. 308 pp. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1942.

That the Shakespearan criticism of any age is a reliable index to the cultural temper of that age has long been a critical truism. Samuel Pepys, Doctor Johnson, Coleridge, and Bradley we can readily see limited by their cultural milieu, finding in the plays of Shakespeare their own image, glorifying those aspects of character inclining to their own predispositions and disparaging whatever tendencies seem to conflict with their own Weltanschauung. No doubt this is all as it should be and constitutes the highest testimony to the richness of Shakespeare's genius. It is a substantiation of Dryden's well-known pronouncement. "Shakespeare . . . is that Nature which they paint and draw." Whatever we make of Nature, we make of Shakespeare.

Unfortunately, perhaps inevitably, however, while succeeding generations of Shakespearan critics have been eager to point out the historical conditioning of their predecessors, they have been loath to admit their own cultural contingency. Only the Shakespeare of their own conception is Shakespeare without tears. Especially has this been true of the orthodox academic criticism of the present century. It has been marked by a kind of critical positivism, which has assumed that since the baroque age of Elizabeth with its religious and metaphysical outlook, there has been 'progress' in both art and criticism. Following the philosophical positivists of the last century, the positivist critic has evolved a method which, derived as it is from a supposed science of society, is presumed to be finally valid and to fix Shakespeare at last as all that he can ever be: the sum of the measurable social forces of his time. Thus, seeking to escape the critical relativism of the Coleridges and the Bradleys, the twentieth century has tended to espouse the Elizabethan Shakespeare, the

only 'real' Shakespeare, the Shakespeare of his own intentions or of his audience's reception. It has assumed that, since art is conditioned by its milieu, its only subject can be this milieu. Thus positivist criticism fosters contemporaneous literalism in interpretation. Since literature can have only sociological references and since society progresses from century to century, it can have few, if any, widening circles of relevant communication, few universal overtones. Bottom is King James, and there's an end on't. A heterodox or liberal positivist may allow that he is the Elizabethan bourgeoisie; but to consider him above all a pleasantly naïve and literal-minded human being who happened to be an Elizabethan artisan—that will never do. That this positivist criticism involves wide critical assumptions posited on highly debatable premises of epistemology and aesthetics has, I think, received scarcely the attention that so important an issue deserves. In order words, this absolute Elizabethan Shakespeare is as much a product of an age as any other. He is not strictly Elizabethan at all. In another hundred years he will be as quaint and as grotesque as the Shakespeare of Rymer or Voltaire.

Mr. Hankins' study of *HAMLET* is done under the shadow of this positivist tradition which has so curiously felt itself the possessor of a new and final organon. Mr. Hankins is not entirely happy, I think, under this shadow, and from time to time he steals out into a freer atmosphere with comments which both unpack his heart and inform our imaginations. At frequent intervals he can but confess himself in radical disagreement with such high priests of the Elizabethan Shakespeare as Miss Lily B. Campbell and Mr. J. W. Draper, to whom he has crooked a suppliant and dutiful knee in the opening pages of his book.

The main assumption which underlies Mr. Hankins' volume, if I read him aright, is that Hamlet can best be known through a regression to the systematizations in religion, society, and politics which were current in Elizabethan days. It is generally assumed that Shakespeare and his audience (and hence the modern reader or audience) can only have viewed the play not in terms of general human experience but in terms of codified abstractions of that experience. Hence when Hamlet hears the ghost, or ponders suicide, or questions honor, the audience's responses were fixed on

a conscious level within narrow and systematic limits. In Mr. Hankins' words: "HAMLET is the greatest problem play. . . , presenting not only political but also religious and ethical questions which occupied the minds of men during Elizabeth's reign. . . ." It is with these latter or *ideal* elements, as he terms them, that he is especially concerned, as his chapter headings show: The Character of Hamlet, Politics, Misanthropy, Ghosts, Religion, Suicide.

Within the positivist tradition in which he works, Mr. Hankins has produced a study which is commendable for its modesty, its thoroughness, and its imagination. Here one may find cogently summarized the orthodox Hamlet which has issued from the most recent generation of scholarship: a strong and active prince, with real problems; with a capable, courageous, and even sacrificial father-uncle as his adversary; with a delay well motivated by typical Elizabethan uncertainty about the nature of ghosts. Here is the anti-Coleridgean, anti-Bradleyan Hamlet, presented without the arrogant sneers, however, that many positivist critics feel obliged to heap upon their benighted predecessors. Here too are illuminating comments upon the changing mind of Hamlet during the course of the play, upon the divergences in the HAMLET texts, and upon the interrelation of many themes of HAMLET with those of other plays. Mr. Hankins' method will not allow him, I think, to 'explain' HAMLET as completely as he supposes it does; but such an exposition as that of Elizabethan ghost and devil lore 'throws light into obscure places,' to use a phrase of Miss Webster's. On the other hand, his method restricts him in treating such themes as religion in HAMLET merely to systematic theology, to penance and repentance, to ecclesiastical forms and creeds. Of the essentially religious character of Hamlet as opposed to that of the irreligious deuteragonists, there is scarcely a trace. Of HAMLET as a profoundly Christian tragedy there is nothing, and I judge that Mr. Hankins would agree that the method would not permit that there should be. Mr. Hankins assumes systematic thought on the part of both Shakespeare and his audience, with the responses to the play proceeding well ordered through its mazes. I think that these are dubious premises, whether historically or aesthetically considered.

Furthermore, one wonders whether Mr. Hankins, in trying to comprehend through Elizabethan formulas and categories Hamlet's melancholy or his concern with honor, suicide, and the after-life, has not at times rather constricted and obscured their dramatic meaning, has not frequently made difficult what is obvious to the commonsense of experience. For instance, Mr. Hankins declares: "To understand Hamlet's state of mind in the first half of the play . . . it is necessary for us to examine the concept of misanthropy as treated by Shakespeare." Is this, in all honesty, true? I do not think so—although there are many good reasons for examining the concept—unless Mr. Hankins means by 'understand' a kind of omniscient comprehension which is reserved for the Deity alone, a kind of knowledge which, the universe being an interdependent whole, must include everything about everything. Must one to 'understand' Andromache's sadness at Hector's departure examine Homer's concept of grief? Did Shakespeare have such a 'concept' of misanthropy? Did his audience? Do we have such a concept? And if we do have, does poetic communication filter through it? Moreover, to try to Elizabethanize the death motif of the play by saying that death was a favorite subject of speculation throughout the sixteenth century is to invite the query: Was it not also of the eighteenth; has it not been of the twentieth? That there have been variations in attitudes toward it, as Theodore Spencer has shown in his *DEATH AND ELIZABETHAN TRAGEDY*, is beside the point. Any theological student can with Mr. Hankins elaborate into endless and diverse doctrinal subtleties the Christian commonplaces of the play, but dramatic understanding does not thereby follow. One does not need to be an Elizabethan to understand Hamlet's concern with worms and skulls. Perhaps, indeed, for the fullest 'understanding' of the play the necessity is not to place the conflicts of the characters back into Elizabethan mores but to divest them of these mores. In fact, in an unorthodox moment Mr. Hankins shows the way. When he contends that Hamlet's idea of justice is so nearly that of Plato's *GORGIAS* that it must have been derived directly therefrom, the cat is out of the Elizabethan bag; for taken *in toto*, Hamlet is seen to be no peculiarly Elizabethan prince at all but the tragically civilized man of Western culture,

a man whose highest politics, like that of the Doctor and Mayor and German Colonel in Mr. Steinbeck's *THE MOON IS DOWN*, is rooted in Greek ethics. Mr. Hankins will never quite venture, however, to break with the positivist vogue. Accordingly on one page he can look in his heart and write that *HAMLET* is one of the noblest utterances of the human spirit, finally comprehensible in terms of Christ and Socrates; and on the next page he can assert that "its characters and problems are those of sixteenth-century England" and "the play was thus more intelligible to his [Shakespeare's] age than ours." There are two criteria of comprehension in the book, incompatible and unreconciled. Explicitly Mr. Hankins gives precedence to the latter; often implicitly he acknowledges the former. One cannot serve both Socrates and Mr. Draper.

It is when following his positivist thesis to its politico-religious implications, however, that Mr. Hankins arouses most skepticism as to the validity of his method. Most simply stated, the invalidating premise is the old one: *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. This in turn breeds other confusions: to take analogues as influences, and to consider that because an author uses his own times as his subject *matter*, he uses his own times as his subject. Ignoring the explicit assumptions of the play, which Schücking and others have showed Shakespeare always made clear to his audience, Mr. Hankins offers an elaborate analysis of English attitudes toward incest subsequent to the marriages of Henry VIII and emerges with the conclusion that the Elizabethan Protestant regarded the Gertrude-Claudius union as incestuous, the Catholics as unobjectionable. In other words, Shakespeare wrote two plays, one for Protestants, one for Catholics. Or again, because there are parallels between *HAMLET* and the Queen Elizabeth-Mary Stuart affair, Mr. Hankins is driven by his method into the conclusion that Hamlet's conduct is a detailed and deliberate reflection of that of the English Queen. To Mr. Hankins Essex is partly Fortinbras, partly Laertes. To Mr. Dover Wilson, one remembers, Hamlet is a study of Essex. Yet Mr. Hankins can confidently conclude: "To an audience viewing *HAMLET* shortly after her [Queen Elizabeth's] death, the political element of the play would have been quite clear." If Shakespeare could see all this, I think he would not

be without tears. Perhaps, after all, Hamlet is Hamlet, Essex is Essex, and there is a possibility that Shakespeare is neither Bacon nor Oxford.

How unlikely such a clarity of political reference would have been to the average Elizabethan spectator is suggested by Mr. Alfred Harbage's bright little book, *SHAKESPEARE'S AUDIENCE*. The easy generalizations that have been made about the audience—its homogeneity, its brutality, its superstitions, its vulgarity, and the like—dissipate before Mr. Harbage's array of contemporary evidence and the lucid sanity of his presentation. He is willing to risk few generalizations about that audience, but among the few is this: "Nothing we can discover from examining their daily routine, their frugal expense accounts, and their quiet and sensible letters suggests that Elizabethans, individually or collectively, were vastly different from us." Another generalization that he is willing to propose is that the Elizabethan theatre, as a place where all classes might mingle freely together, became a democratic symbol; and most of the contemporary attacks on the evils of the theatre, he feels, may be discounted as biased denunciations from those who saw in this democracy a threat to their own authority or security. The audience was composed of all Elizabethan classes, from courtier to artisan and vagabond and apprentice, including even children and respectable, unmasked women from the middle class. Each day in London at the turn of the century some three thousand persons attended the theatre, seeking it because it offered better and cheaper entertainment than a pipe of tobacco or a quart of sack or a printed book. It is not surprising, therefore, that Mr. Harbage is skeptical about confident "pronouncements on what Shakespeare's audience believed about various things". Indeed, he thrusts to the heart of the positivist method: "If a critic quotes selected passages from selected works to prove what the audience thought upon selected topics, we are likely to witness only a sinister alliance between the pedantry of two ages." Mr. Harbage's audience, therefore, is a convincingly real one, far removed from those strange creatures of Mr. Hankins' book who stood or sat in the Globe on a hot afternoon bisecting Essex into Laertes and Fortinbras, arraying Hamlet in the Queen's farthingale, and meticulously respond-

ing to the nice distinctions which Shakespeare made between penance and repentance, between soul and spirit.

Like Mr. Harbage, Mr. Alwin Thaler has long earned the gratitude of all who are interested in the conditions under which Shakespeare's plays were written, staged, and printed. Collected in his *SHAKESPEARE AND DEMOCRACY* are carefully substantiated treatments of the vicissitudes of the strolling players in Shakespeare's England, of the original Malvolio, of the debt of Sir Thomas Browne to Shakespeare and Bacon, and of many another incident or detail of the Elizabethan stage. These historical reconstructions, however, differ radically from those of the positivist critics: they relate history and literature without identifying them. Mr. Thaler's well-documented contention that Malvolio was modeled on crabbed William Ffarington, steward to the Earl of Derby, is a case in point. Perhaps Mr. Thaler is right, or perhaps his list of parallels between Ffarington and Malvolio simply means that of all the stewards whom Shakespeare might have known and whose traits are recorded, the one whose character most nearly coincides with that of Malvolio is Ffarington. (No doubt some future scholar will find an indubitable model for the Late George Apley.) But Mr. Thaler never makes the positivist assumption that to understand Malvolio we must know Ffarington, or that Malvolio is Ffarington, or that Shakespeare supposed and intended that his audience would be interested in Malvolio as a means of understanding Ffarington. Indeed, the essay, like the accompanying "Shakespeare on Style, Imagination, and Poetry," is directed toward an understanding of the method rather than the substance of Shakespeare's art.

The crucial evidence of Mr. Thaler's freedom from the positivist fallacy, however, is his essay on Shakespeare as a proponent of democracy. The positivist critics have contended that Shakespeare as a 'typical Elizabethan' not only uncritically took a monarchical and aristocratic society for granted but also glorified its institutions and functions *per se*. Mr. Thaler offers much evidence to modify if not to discount entirely this view. He sees that neither Shakespeare nor his audience responded to kingship with fixed adoration, that there were for the Elizabethans as there are for us both good and bad kings and good and bad com-

moners in the play. Both king and commoner Shakespeare depicted as subject to moral and religious imperatives which, inscrutable though they might be, enclosed the political world. The perspective of the plays is not mundane and sociological, as the positivists must and do make it. Yet even on the level of constitutional democratic rights, Mr. Thaler finds Shakespeare neither an 'entrancing mossback' nor a 'radical', but a brave dreamer 'for the times to come', whose history plays, rising as they do to a climax in increasing constitutional guarantees, in respect for commoners, and in responsibility of sovereign to subject, imply their author's substantial agreement with democratic processes. Had Mr. Thaler chosen to expand his conception of democracy from that of a political structure to what the late John Buchan called 'a spiritual testament,' he would have found in addition, I think, that Shakespeare not only reflected a progressive constitutionalism but also has been a major and germinal force in the attainment of that sensitive social imagination which is requisite in a democratic people. That in politics Shakespeare was not the positivists' complacent time-server may be inferred from the equalitarian societies which Lear and Gloucester and Gonzalo envision in their most perceptive moments. But Shakespeare's final democracy, I think, lies in his showing the features of mercy, justice, friendship, and charity—virtues whose aggregate constitutes the democratic mind and whose absence, whatever the constitutional structure, spells the imminent descent of tyranny.

Devoted as he is to Shakespeare and to democracy and to Whitman, Mr. Thaler is troubled at the suggestion of internecine rifts in his trinity. The reconciliation of Shakespeare and democracy he has persuasively effected; the reconciliation of Whitman and Shakespeare is more difficult. In "Shakespeare and Walt Whitman" he attempts to qualify Whitman's well-known and frequently expressed condemnation of Shakespeare as feudalistic in import and therefore unsuitable for the impressionable minds of republican readers. Mr. Thaler's contention is that Whitman in his old age, "if he did not altogether change his mind, . . . certainly modified his position." Such a statement is typical of Mr. Thaler's judicious and undogmatic approach to 'all the facts', and his essay is useful in showing that there were always reservations

in Whitman's apparently sweeping disparagement of Shakespeare for Americans. Yet one cannot but realize that up to the end of his life Whitman viewed Shakespeare's plays as a part of our 'heritage' (that is, they were a stage in our cultural evolution), and he admired most the history plays because they aided in the undermining of feudalism. The fact is that Whitman's criticism (except for occasional casual remarks) rests upon positivist tenets, and like the positivists today he viewed Shakespeare sociologically as a purveyor of a political system and a social creed, outmoded in nineteenth century America because ideas, politics, art, and science 'progress' together. As an avowed champion of Science and Progress, Whitman in his critical pronouncements regarded literary content sociologically as propaganda, not imaginatively as symbol. Political systems and institutions were to him the ultimate, not the incidental, referents of literature. That Lincoln's devotion to democracy was deepened and intensified by his devotion to Shakespeare because they both subserve the same humane ends, he could not have admitted. Whitman remains a great poet and Mr. Thaler's apology for him remains a worthy effort; but a greater service for both Shakespeare and democracy might have resulted had Mr. Thaler directed his attention to the fallacious positivist premises on which Whitman's judgment of Shakespeare always rested.

Unless such premises concerning the relevance of literature are false, Miss Margaret Webster's *SHAKESPEARE WITHOUT TEARS* is a meaningless book, for it not only assumes but explicitly champions a Shakespeare who communicates with American business men and truck drivers as well as with Elizabethans and scholars. Miss Webster is of course aware that there are especial topical elements in the plays which are obscure to us; but she asserts that even in Elizabethan days these were the incidental, not the primary elements, as the positivists contend. Admitting, for instance, the well-known Achilles-Essex parallels in *TROILUS AND CRESSIDA*, she nevertheless concludes: "Shakespeare was too good a dramatist to write a dramatized gossip column filled with allegorical nomenclature."

If Miss Webster makes "no pretension to deep Shakespearean scholarship," it cannot be said that she is unaware of the major

trends and hypotheses of modern scholars. Greg, Pollard, Dover Wilson, Stoll, and Granville-Baker are assimilated gracefully into her reading of the plays; her interpretations of the Shakespeare heroines is judiciously aligned with a knowledge of the technique of the boy actors for whom the parts were written; and she is sufficiently concerned with the crucial issue of texts in many of the plays to make a cogent defense of Hemings and Condell and of the Folio. Her necessarily brief treatment of Shakespeare's life, texts, and theatre is at once readable and generally reliable (she makes Shakespeare a schoolmaster before coming to London and Jonson a university man). Though scholars may find here no new facts of literary history, those who are interested in Shakespeare as well as Shakespearean scholarship will not ignore *SHAKESPEARE WITHOUT TEARS*; for it is Miss Webster's conviction that only on the stage can finally be made the pragmatic test of the validity of scholarly hypotheses regarding texts and stage conditions. In effect, the desideratum for 'understanding' Shakespeare is not so much an immersion into Elizabethanism as an active projection of his drama in the living theatre.

Modern Shakespearean productions have suffered, Miss Webster admits, from a contemptuous ignorance of Shakespearean scholarship on the part of actors and producers. For her, Shakespeare is never merely the material for a star's uninformed and irresponsible exploitation. On the other hand, her charge against professors of Shakespeare as "in the main" having "showed no sign of admitting that their bibliographical ingenuity was not an end in itself or that the living theatre had anything valuable to say about Shakespeare" is uncomfortably just. *SHAKESPEARE WITHOUT TEARS* is a laudable and exemplary effort to bring them together. No doubt the elocutionary actor will be impatient with the scholarly foundation of the book. It is just as certain that the antiquarian and the imaginatively constricted positivists will be equally impatient with the vivid emergence in her pages of characters who are primarily human beings and incidentally Elizabethans. Not that the volume gives us a Shakespeare who will admit of no dispute. At times the sensitive reader of the plays may feel that Miss Webster's association with the stage has led to a distortion of such characters as Falstaff, Iago, and

Hotspur, whose very actability has possibly blinded her somewhat to the defects or degeneration of their character in the plays. Yet the general reader will find that her very acute sense of the vitality of the characters on the stage has lent dramatic brightness and strength even to such infrequently acted plays as *LOVE'S LABOURS LOST* and *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*. For both actor and reader there are suggestive conclusions scattered throughout the series of brief considerations which Miss Webster gives to all the plays in the canon: on Dogberry and Verges as sober rather than farcical characters; on the air of good will that permeates *AS YOU LIKE IT* and dominates all the characters; on the subtler comedy of pride which underlies the broad laughter of the *SHREW*. Miss Webster has written, as it were, a persuasive *apologia pro theatro suo*.

Miss Webster as actor-manager and Mr. Thaler as scholar have reassuringly pointed the way toward a sound and living Shakespeare in America; for they are of one mind as to Shakespeare's relevance for a modern democracy. For them Shakespeare's *raison d'être* is neither the craft of acting nor the busyness of antiquarian scholarship. Unlike those positivist critics who see in Shakespeare merely a glorified historical document, they declare that though the plays (in Miss Webster's words) "have an Elizabethan background in Shakespeare's Elizabethan mind" which we must understand for the light they throw "into shadowed places," nevertheless the primary question is "what qualities in their [the characters'] mind do we share?" Opposed to the positivist Shakespeare rigidly defined and knowable through the diverse systematizations of his time, they recognize a spaciousness which contains legitimate though varied meanings for countless moderns whose systematizations of experience are vastly different. They are both aware that the best way to escape a critical relativism of judgment about Shakespeare is not to follow the positivists into the never-never land of sociological Elizabethanism, but to understand him as far as possible through the perspective of all that we call Western civilization. In Miss Webster's words: "It is always a closeness at which we should aim, rather than an emphasis of separation. . . Shakespeare is part of the stuff of which our civilization has been forged." Mr. Thaler in his Epi-

logue on the perennial modernity of Shakespeare chooses to let Coleridge speak his final word: "To find no contradiction in the union of the old and the new, to contemplate the Ancient of Days with feelings as fresh as if they sprang forth at his own *fiat*—this characterizes the minds that feel the riddle of the world, and may help to unravel it."

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### WAR, REVOLUTION, AND PEACE

THEY WANTED WAR, by Otto D. Tolischus. New York: Reynal and Hitchcock. \$3.00.

CONDITIONS OF PEACE, by Edward Hallett Carr. New York: Macmillan. \$2.50.

THE QUEST FOR PEACE SINCE THE WORLD WAR, by William E. Rappard. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. \$4.00.

IN DEMOCRATIC IDEALS AND REALITY, published in 1919, Sir Halford Mackinder gave a warning to democracies, a warning as much against their own weaknesses as against the strength of what he called the "organizer" and what we would call the totalitarian dictator. "The democrat," he said, "thinks in principles, be they—according to his idiosyncrasy—ideals, prejudices, or economic laws." The organizer opposes "his strategy to the ethics of the democrat." He "must carefully consider the territory which it is desirable to occupy and the social structures—not economic laws—which are to his hand as the result of history. . . Democracy refuses to think strategically unless and until compelled to do so for purposes of defense."<sup>1</sup>

He might have added a further warning. The Germans, who are the ideal example of the "organizer" mentality, are thoroughly aware of this democratic habit of mind and of the use which German propaganda can make of it. Wythe Williams, in *RIDDLE OF THE REICH*<sup>2</sup> reports seeing the private record of the conversations of the Nazi agent Dr. Frederick Auhagen "with several men whom

<sup>1</sup>DEMOCRATIC IDEALS AND REALITY, pp. 30-33.

<sup>2</sup>pp. 317-319.

he trusted." Dr. Auhagen was planning to publish "a Nazi primer in English for mass distribution in the United States, particularly among our soldiers." Dr. Auhagen emphasized that "the book should be one hundred per cent American, but actually it would show the breakdown of democracy in America. . . . Any reference to Germany and to Nazi activities, would be poison. Care should be taken that the pamphlet be kept in ideological terms and that nothing seditious be included. It really should be written by an American. Lawrence Dennis has the philosophical background, but he can't write for the masses. So I shall write it myself."

The weakness which Sir Halford Mackinder noted, and of which the Germans are so quick to take advantage, furnishes perhaps the best touchstone with which to distinguish the two most important schools of interpretation of Nazism, ignoring the lunatic fringe of those who interpret the movement as "the last stand of capitalism," or as a "transient period of retrogression," or as a vicious authoritarian regime forced on a totally unwilling people. Fundamentally, most of the informed interpreters of Nazism differentiate themselves into (a) those who emphasize the social revolutionary aspects of Nazism and who interpret German foreign policy in terms of the "inner dynamic" of internal policy; (b) those who regard Nazism as a resurgence of Pan-Germanism, who regard the present war as a continuation of the last one, and who regard German internal policy as dictated by considerations of preparation for and conduct of war. The first group demonstrates the weakness Sir Halford Mackinder refers to; the second avoids it. The first subordinates war to revolution; the second reverses the relationship.

Mr. Tolischus's book is one of the most difficult to classify in this respect. The reviewer with a fondness for pigeonholes yearns to be able to say that it follows the main interpretative lines of Dr. Rauschning's *THE REVOLUTION OF NIHILISM*. The keynote is to be found (hopes the reviewer) in the title of Chapter 2. "World Revolution: A Challenge to America." It seems to place Mr. Tolischus's book in the first group. A member of the second group would have said "Word Conquest: A Challenge to America." Nevertheless Mr. Tolischus declines to fit in so neatly. Although his chapter-headings seem to place him in the first

school, his opinions sometimes belong to the second. One of the two main principles of German propaganda is German racial dogma. The other is "National Socialist world revolution aiming at the creation of a new social, economic and political structure of the world which, while designed to promote world rule of the German master race, nevertheless also enlists the allegiance and support of partisans of authoritarian government everywhere who hope to get power under the new regime and, as shown by recent events, are at times even willing to sell out their own country to the enemy" (pp. 56-57). But dealing with German rearmament, Mr. Tolischus says that "while the democracies were solving their political and economic problems at the expense of national defense and national efficiency, Germany embarked upon a moral, military and economic mobilization based on a revolutionary ideology which, whatever else is said about it, produced a new fighting generation and equipped it with the multitude of modern weapons with which Hitler is now revolutionizing warfare and dictating the law of action to the enemy" (p. 63). The confusion between world revolution and world conquest becomes most apparent in the analysis of economic policy: "Under this system a nation of 80 million plus still uncounted millions of conquered subject peoples has been converted into a gigantic trust which has no other aims or dogmas except total economic and military war in service of the National Socialist world revolution that is to establish German world supremacy" (p. 76).

In his discussion of Nazi control of and policy toward art, press, and general propaganda, Mr. Tolischus sometimes passes what some may regard as generalizations of too sweeping and unqualified disapproval. He fails to distinguish sufficiently between policies which the Nazis pursued in peace and which the democracies have been compelled to imitate in wartime, and policies which are entirely alien to democratic practice. Nazi control of art, press, and propaganda in the interest of the war effort is one thing. Nazi use of the state to subsidize journalists and artists who are members of the party (while virtually suppressing those who are not) is another matter. There is a difference between objecting to the concentration camp in principle and in objecting rather to what goes on in *German* concentration camps. Mr. Tolischus sometimes mobilizes against the Nazi

conception of art only the chaotic conception of "art for art's sake" without realizing that it was just a vacuum which gave the Nazis something to fill. Walter Lippman some years ago noted how "in the last hundred years painters have illustrated by feverish experimentation the modern man's effort to find an adequate substitute for the organizing principle of the religion which he has lost. . . . The intuition behind the theory of art for art's sake is the artist's wish to be free of a responsibility which he has never before had put upon him."

A further word of praise for Mr. Tolischus is in order. He has briefly but effectively indicated the relationship between Hitler and Wagner.

If Mr. Tolischus is difficult to classify as between the two major groups of interpreters, Professor E. H. Carr is careful to place himself in the first group. "Those who still seek to fan national hatreds are survivors of the last war who have failed to understand the change of climate. . . Great wars are, then, commonly part of a revolutionary process whose fundamental causes may be quite different from the immediate causes of the war" (pp. 4-5). The world revolution is, according to Professor Carr, easy to analyze. "It is a revolution against the three predominant ideas of the nineteenth century: liberal democracy, national self-determination and *laissez-faire* economics." (p. 11). The first and third victims of the revolution are closely related. "What is really under attack is not democracy as such, but liberal democracy in its specific nineteenth-century form" (p. 12). But nineteenth century democracy is precisely the democracy which in England accepted (to a certain extent) the principles of *laissez-faire*. Under the system capitalism developed into monopoly capitalism; under the latter system power is in the hands of organized capital and organized labor and not in the hands of the unorganized majority. The remedy, according to Professor Carr, is to be found in giving to a democratically controlled government the power to regulate economic activity in the interest of consumers, not of producers. In particular, Professor Carr recommends price control (to keep prices of essential articles down, not up) and, like Mr. Wilkie, government enforcement of a policy

<sup>2</sup>A PREFACE TO MORALS, pp. 94 and 105.

of decentralization of industry. He even makes the revolutionary proposal that if London is to be the economic center of England, the capital should be moved elsewhere. There may well be many who will agree with Professor Carr's diagnosis of the ills of contemporary society. But how many will agree that this has anything to do with solution of the German problem?

The revolt against national self-determination is less convincingly presented by Professor Carr. "National Socialism began as a specifically nationalist movement, and even invoked the principle of national self-determination. But the 'inner dynamic' of the revolution turned it into a supra-national movement for a European order in which the right of national self-determination would be subject to the limitations of a centralised military and economic dictatorship" (p. 12). But who (except Professor Carr and perhaps Mr. Chamberlain) ever thought that the Germans believed in national self-determination except for themselves. The Nazis, it is true, changed their slogans to meet the change in the need for slogans. Insofar as dynamic forces moved the Nazis against their will, those forces would seem to have been external (*e. g.* British rearmament, lend-lease) rather than internal.

Coming to the central theme of the book, the conditions of peace, Professor Carr asserts that "broadly speaking, the problem of Europe is the problem of Germany" (p. 213). Once more, there may be some who agree with his statement of the problem and not with his solution of it. Professor Carr remembers that "resentment was a bad counsellor in 1919," (p. 214), and recommends specifically a policy of "reconciliation by co-operation." He correctly discounts the thesis of German wickedness as "the product of an emotional reaction, familiar in all periods of history, which has led men to brand their enemies as moral reprobates, particularly when it is desired to find a justification for treating them as inferiors and outcasts" (p. 215). But having demolished this straw man, and having noted that many held the same opinion of France in the days of Napoleon, Professor Carr empties the baby out with the bath by ignoring the fact—most vital of all—that France was aggressive when it was strong enough to be aggressive (from Louis XIV to Napoleon); that Germany is the same now; that if the remedy for French aggression lay in the relative weakening of France and the restoration of the balance

of power, the same may be true of Germany, not of reasons of resentment and not from punitive motives but from practical considerations of preventive self-preservation for the rest of the world.

Professor Carr's appeasing political attitude toward Germany is backed up with an economic argument which may truly startle one who agrees with his earlier economic analysis of the evils of monopoly and the remedy of decentralization. "Germany," he says, "herself has abandoned the old economic unit of the Reich. In so doing, she has obeyed not only the immediate exigencies of war, but more fundamental economic trends which cannot be reversed" (p. 236). Having criticized monopoly in domestic economic affairs, and having criticized the British nineteenth century world economic system, and having rejoiced in the breakup of one and the prospective breakup of the other, Professor Carr might well be expected to advocate as the economic unit in international affairs the small nation attempting to achieve a *relative* self-sufficiency and a *relative* balance between agriculture and industry. But Professor Carr foresees something quite different. He foresees a European economic unit with a European Planning Authority which seems, to this reviewer, as Utopian as any of the schemes of those whom Professor Carr ridicules. And even if such an integrated European unit came into existence, Professor Carr fails to tell us how Germany could be prevented from dominating it.

Professor William E. Rappard belongs as definitely to the second school of analysis as Professor Carr does to the first. Professor Rappard sees peace as a problem of harmony; but international peace is, according to Professor Rappard, primarily an international, not an internal problem. Professor Rappard deals in detail with the quest for peace during the first World War and, at the Peace Conference; with the search for peace through arbitration, through collective security, and through disarmament. He concludes that arbitration is a useful substitute for war, but that the possibilities of this method are quite limited in the present state of intentional relations" (p. 206). Collective security likewise failed because of the absence of a real international community, and likewise disarmament. Professor Rappard seems to feel that the failure of disarmament is something to be regretted—a feeling which some who agree with his other conclusions may

not share. But this is a minor matter. The most significant conclusions of Professor Rappard—and they are particularly significant coming from one of his Swiss neutral and anti-imperialist background—have to do with the question of justice in the peace settlement of 1919, and with the relationship between a just peace and a lasting peace. Professor Rappard's conclusions on both these points are diametrically opposed to those of Professor Carr. Professor Rappard believes that the *territorial* settlement in Europe in 1919, was remarkable not for its injustice but for its justice. This conclusion he shares with other scholars. But most impressive is his handling of the question of the relationship between what is morally good and what is politically good:

"My conclusion therefore is that if self-determination be held to be the ruling principle of international justice and of the Treaty of Versailles be made responsible for the present European disorder, it cannot fairly be on account of its inherent injustice. Is it not rather because, unsupported by the military coalition which had imposed it upon a weakened Germany, its provisions, after the breakup of that coalition, quite naturally ceased faithfully to reflect the national forces whose relative position it had defined? If the United States had failed to intervene in Europe in 1917, the peace settlement would doubtless have been far less just. But it might well have been precarious" (p. 480). Here is a frank facing of facts which cannot be too vigorously brought home to the American public. It is doubtful whether a scholar who openly asserts that an unjust peace may well be more lasting than a just one will gain much hearing in America, or, for that matter, in any democracy. But if a sufficiently convincing ideological cloud of justice can be used to cloak the next peace settlement for purposes of public consumption, but not to obstruct the practical and realistic necessities of the balance of power, perhaps the next peace, though not likely so long as Utopians hope, will be less precarious than the last one.

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THE ORIGINAL SOCIAL PURPOSE OF THE  
NATURALISTIC NOVEL

Probably no significant movement in modern literature has been more consistently misunderstood than the Naturalistic novel. Ever since Émile Zola defined the Naturalistic or "Experimental" novel in 1880, students of the subject have mistaken its purpose and its philosophy. So radical and frequent were the misinterpretations of Naturalism in his own day that Zola, in a moment of exasperation, felt obliged to voice this rather strong complaint: "What always puzzles me is the manner in which my words are read. For more than ten years I have been repeating the same things, and I must really express myself very badly, for the readers are very rare who will read 'white' when I write 'white.' Ninety-nine people out of a hundred persist in reading 'black' . . . For example, do they not say foolish enough things about this poor naturalism? If I were to gather together all that has been published on this question, I should raise a monument to human imbecility."

Zola no doubt would choose kinder words to describe the performance of modern critics of Naturalism. Unlike Zola's contemporaries, the critics of today, instead of regarding the Naturalistic novel as a vulgar exercise in slang and obscenity, unworthy of their attention, accept its subject matter and make serious efforts to understand its philosophic and social implications. Yet, if Zola could return and scan the most recent commentaries, he would still have reason to complain that the critics persist in reading "black" when he wrote "white." My purpose is to show that the Naturalistic novel, as Émile Zola originally conceived of it, was based not upon a philosophy of pessimism, as is commonly supposed, but upon a philosophy of optimism; and that its fundamental purpose was not a mere objective description of life as a trap, dirty and mean, but the immediate betterment of human society.

To make certain that we are not tilting with straw men in this discussion, let me first establish the point that current definitions describe Naturalism as a philosophy of pessimistic determinism. Vernon Louis Parrington, in 1930, wrote that Naturalism was

"pessimistic realism," and that the type of realism called Naturalism by Émile Zola "conceived of the individual as a pawn on the chessboard of society." In 1934, Harry Hartwick remarked that "At the foundation of Zola's method lay a belief in scientific determinism, which conceives of man as an unimportant experiment in the vast laboratory of Nature, a being shaped and conditioned by circumstances beyond his control." More recently, Oscar Cargill, in his *Intellectual America*, asserts that "*Naturalism*, of which Zola was the first comprehensive exponent, is pessimistic determinism—the conviction that we are hurried towards evil and ignominious ends whether we will or not, that degeneracy is the common history of man."

According to this definition, the Naturalistic novel cannot have a social and reformatory purpose. If man is impotent and quite incapable of controlling, or even of modifying, the powerful forces which shape his character and hurry him down the path to inevitable degeneracy and sordid death, obviously a novel devoted to portraying this impotence cannot logically express any desire of its author to improve or reform society. On the contrary, a novel written by a pessimistic determinist can have no purpose other than the author's masochistic urge to show a man like himself defeated by the world and—like a beetle on a pin—made the squirming, pathetic victim of a brutal, cosmic jest. The tragedy of such a novel, if it can be called a tragedy, will lie, as Parrington suggests, in the "pity and irony with which we contemplate man and his fate in the world."

But such confusion has resulted from the assumption that Naturalism is pessimistic determinism, and from the further assumption that the Naturalistic novel cannot have a social purpose, that this definition is automatically suspect. Critics have had difficulty reconciling the notion that all Naturalists are pessimistic determinists with the acknowledged fact that almost all Naturalistic novelists have attempted to reform society. The curious and somewhat embarrassing conclusions to which this discrepancy leads are nowhere better illustrated than in the hundred and twenty-odd pages which Oscar Cargill devotes to his study of Naturalism. Attempting to stick to the definition of Naturalism as pessimistic determinism, Professor Cargill is forced to admit

that the best known Naturalists, including Zola—the recognized founder of the movement—are not really Naturalists at all. Professor Cargill's remarks on Theodore Dreiser are particularly interesting in this connection. Having found that the Naturalism of Zola was impure because of its reformatory implications, Professor Cargill begins his analysis of Dreiser by announcing that he is the "very quintessence of Naturalism" because he "believes in nothing and works for nothing." Yet, when he has completed his examination of Dreiser's novels, Professor Cargill concludes that Dreiser plays favorites with his characters, that he wants society to remain Christian, and that he must therefore be condemned as a "double-standard" Naturalist, something which a genuine Naturalist should never be. Finally, Professor Cargill closes his discussion by asserting "that the leaders in the American Naturalistic school are by no means *convinced* Naturalists—they betray themselves," he says, "by pet schemes for human betterment, schemes in which no genuine and thorough-going pessimist has any legitimate interest." It seems reasonable to suggest at this point that if Émile Zola, Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser—and we may as well include such writers as Dos Passos and John Steinbeck—that if they cannot be made to fit a definition of Naturalism, there is something wrong, not with the novelists, but with the definition. If these writers "betray themselves by pet schemes for human betterment . . . in which no genuine and thorough-going pessimist has any legitimate interest," it would seem that these writers—with the possible exception of Dreiser—are not pessimists, and that the definition of Naturalism should be altered accordingly. A brief examination of *The Experimental Novel* will show even more clearly the need for a new definition by revealing that Émile Zola, for one, worked, not only in practice but in theory, from premises that were unmistakably optimistic, with the specific purpose of reforming society.

In the first two chapters of *The Experimental Novel*, the so-called Bible of Naturalism, Zola, relying constantly on the scientific authority of Claude Bernard, the author of the *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine*, defines the experimental method, and explains how it may be used by the novelist. Quite

simply, the method is based upon the principle, accepted by scientists, that no natural phenomenon, animate or inanimate, human or inhuman, exists without a cause. According to this principle of determinism, there is a chain of causation which, when it is divulged, will explain the position and the shape of a rock on the side of a hill. There is also a sequence of events and influences which, if it can be accurately described, will account for the character and the actions—no matter how abnormal they may seem to be—of the individual man in society. The immediate object of the experimental method is to lay bare the determining causes of phenomena—the causes, that is, without which the phenomena could not exist. In the hands of physicians the experimental method will be used to expose the determinism of diseases of the body. Once the determinism of such a disease has been disclosed, the disease may be brought under control and perhaps completely destroyed by the physicians. To illustrate this, Claude Bernard cited the example of scabies, better known as mange, or the itch. "Today," he wrote, "the cause of this disease is known and determined experimentally; the whole subject has become scientific, and empiricism has disappeared. A cure is surely and without exception effected when you place yourself in the conditions known by experiment to produce this end."

Zola devotes the entire third chapter of his essay to an account of what the novelist may accomplish by the experimental method. The particular subject which the experimental novelist should investigate Zola describes as the "reciprocal effect of society on the individual and the individual on society." In Zola's judgment, the experimental novelists, like the men in white coats in medical laboratories, can contribute much toward mankind's mastery of disease. "We are . . . experimental moralists," he exclaims, "showing by experiment in what way a passion acts in a certain social condition. The day in which we gain control of the mechanism of this passion we can treat it and reduce it, or at least make it as inoffensive as possible. And in this consists the practical utility and high morality of our naturalistic works..." A few lines further on, Zola suggests that the possibilities of experimental fiction for the reform of society are virtually unlimited: "... when we are in possession of the different laws," he writes,

"it will only be necessary to work upon the individuals and the surroundings if we wish to find the best social condition. In this way we shall construct a practical sociology, and our work will be a help to political and economical sciences. I do not know . . . of a more noble work, nor of a grander application. To be the master of good and evil, to regulate life, to regulate society, to solve in time all the problems of socialism, above all, to give justice a solid foundation by solving through experiment the questions of criminality—is not this being the most useful and the most moral workers in the human workshop?" Finally, in the concluding sentences of this chapter, Zola makes it clear that Naturalism is the very opposite of pessimistic determinism, and that the prime purpose of the Naturalistic novel is the betterment of society: "we . . . content ourselves with searching out the determinism of social phenomena, and leaving to legislators and to men of affairs the care of controlling sooner or later these phenomena in such a way as to develop the good and reject the bad, from the point of view of their utility to man.

"In our rôle as experimental moralists we show the mechanism of the useful and the useless, we disengage the determinism of the human and social phenomena so that, in their turn, the legislators can one day dominate and control these phenomena. In a word, we are working with the whole country toward that great object, the conquest of nature and the increase of man's power a hundredfold."

So far as I have been able to discover, the erroneous belief that Zola and his Naturalistic descendants are pessimistic determinists arises from a confusion of determinism with fatalism, and from the resulting idea that whatever is is not right but inevitable. This confusion had arisen in Zola's day, and he attempted to expel it by declaring flatly that the two terms were not synonymous. "I reach thus," he says, "the great reproach with which they think to crush the naturalistic novelists, by treating them as fatalists. How many times have they wished to prove to us that as soon as we did not accept free will, that as soon as man was no more to us than a living machine, acting under the influence of heredity and surroundings, we should fall into gross fatalism, we should debase humanity to the rank of a

troop marching under the baton of destiny. It is necessary to define our terms: we are not fatalists, we are determinists, which is not at all the same thing. Claude Bernard explains the two terms very plainly: 'We have given the name of determinism to the nearest or determining cause of phenomena. We never act upon the essence of phenomena in nature, but only on their determinism, and by this very fact, that we act upon it, determinism differs from fatalism, upon which we could not act at all.'

The critics of Naturalism and pessimists like Theodore Dreiser contend that the sores and wounds of society in a world of determinism are inevitable, like the revolutions of the earth or the wetness of rain. But Zola recognizes a distinction between natural phenomena, for which God alone is responsible, and social phenomena, for which man is at least partly responsible. Zola insists that a social disease is inevitable only until its determinism has been disengaged and understood by men. In *L'Assommoir*, for example, he shows us how Coupeau and Gervaise disintegrate under the influence of alcohol—a commodity certainly not forced upon them by an act of God. Zola provides a detailed description of the nature and the consequences of alcoholism so that we may understand its determinism and take steps to prevent the degeneracy to which it leads. Zola's own account of the moral to be taken from the book proves that he regarded *L'Assommoir* as a temperance tract, designed to show the need for comprehensive social legislation: "Educate the worker, take him out of the misery in which he lives, combat the crowding and the promiscuity of the workers' quarters where the air thickens and stinks; above all prevent drunkenness which decimates the people and kills mind and body. . . ." Accomplish these things, he urges, and this social evil will disappear.

The passages I have cited from *The Experimental Novel*, and the example of *L'Assommoir*, make it clear that cording to Zola, a pessimistic Naturalist is a contradiction in terms. Zola would never accept Theodore Dreiser, for example, as a member of the fraternity of experimental novelists. He would regard Dreiser as a mere impostor who had borrowed the technical machinery of the Naturalists, the better to communicate his perverse and hopeless doctrines. The chief difference between

Zola and Dreiser is the difference between one who acts to improve his condition, and one who accepts his condition and invites us to pity his submission. This is the difference between an authentic Naturalist and a pessimistic determinist. Zola might agree with Dreiser that the tragedy of Clyde Griffiths was inevitable, but he would object to Dreiser's implication at the end of *An American Tragedy* that a repetition of the disaster is inevitable. Zola would explain that if Dreiser had performed properly the true function of the Naturalistic novelist, he would have revealed the determinism of Clyde's downfall so clearly as to make unnecessary a recurrence of the circumstances which caused Clyde's destruction. He would argue that just as soon as Dreiser disclosed the determinism of the social disease from which Clyde suffered, it became the duty of rational men to alter or destroy the conditions necessary for its existence. If men permit the noxious conditions to remain unchanged, the disease will continue to prosper, but its continuation will not have been inevitable. But Dreiser maintains that the disease will continue to flourish because men are irrational, or at least too indifferent to alter existing conditions. Zola, however, would not agree. He insists that men can and will correct social evils, once their determinism has been divulged, just as medical science could and did control tuberculosis, once its determinism had been sufficiently disengaged. Zola, I think, has the better of the argument, for not even Dreiser can deny that great numbers of men, having been instructed in the determinism of tuberculosis, diphtheria, cholera, and typhoid, have been rational and energetic enough to profit from their information. However, the main point I wish to make about Dreiser is that he does not move further from authentic Naturalism when, as in *An American Tragedy*, he appears to sympathize with his characters and suggest that radical social reforms are imperative unless the tragedy is to recur again and again. By suggesting that such reforms be effected, even though he himself has no genuine hope that they ever will be, Dreiser, far from impairing further his claims to the title of Naturalist, actually comes closer to the original purpose of Naturalism—as Zola conceived of it—than he has ever done before.

By way of conclusion, I should like to add that the Naturalistic

novel was merely a late nineteenth-century continuation in prose fiction of a movement that began in the eighteenth century, if not earlier, and took rather definite literary form in the poetry of William Wordsworth. Philosophically the movement is based on the old idea of progress and the perfectibilitarian principle that man has an infinite capacity for improving himself and his environment. The purpose of Naturalism, moreover, is primarily utilitarian—that of stimulating and strengthening man's ability to better his society. The movement takes its name from the belief of its exponents that human society, if it is to be successful, must rest upon a precise and comprehensive understanding of nature and its immutable laws. Zola adopted Naturalism because he believed in its high promise for the future of mankind, and because he wished to add dignity and significance to the French novel. In his hands, the novel had for its aesthetic object, not a futile pity for the impotence of man, but the revelation that vital knowledge can be made to spring from human suffering. As Zola understood it, knowledge of nature is the greatest force in nature. Without it man is indeed, in Parrington's phrase, a "pawn on the chessboard of society"; possessed of knowledge, the otherwise helpless individual becomes the master of nature and a morally responsible free agent. Finally, by insisting upon the responsibility of the novelist to keep abreast of the discoveries of scientists and men of learning in all fields, Zola performed a service of immense value to literature and humanity. When all writers have recognized this responsibility, and have persuaded their readers to follow their example, we shall, as Zola predicted sixty years ago, "enter upon a century in which man, grown more powerful, will make use of nature and will utilize its laws to produce upon the earth the greatest possible amount of justice and freedom."

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## NEW LIGHTS ON POE

EDGAR ALLAN POE: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY. By Arthur Hobson Quinn. New York. D. Appleton-Century Company. 1941. \$5.00.

EDGAR ALLAN POE LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS IN THE ENOCH PRATT FREE LIBRARY. Edited by Arthur Hobson Quinn and Richard H. Hart. New York. Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints. 1941.

MERLIN, TOGETHER WITH RECOLLECTIONS OF EDGAR A. POE. By Lambert A. Wilmer; edited by Thomas Ollive Mabbott. New York. Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints. 1941. \$1.50.

MUSIC AND EDGAR ALLAN POE: A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL STUDY. By May Garrettson Evans. Baltimore. The Johns Hopkins Press. 1939.

A CONCORDANCE OF THE POETICAL WORKS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE. By Bradford A. Booth and Claude E. Jones. Baltimore. The Johns Hopkins Press. 1941. \$5.50.

Each year authors and editors make new attempts to give us a rounded, three-dimensional Edgar Allan Poe. Spotlights have been focused on him, from many points of vantage; and innumerable small flashlights have been employed to light—and sometimes in the process to distort—mysterious pits and caverns. Yet these batteries of light have somehow left Poe, the man and the writer, as two-dimensional as any movie hero on a flat screen.

Some recent books do help to increase our knowledge of Poe and his works. Arthur Hobson Quinn's *EDGAR ALLAN POE: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY* can indeed be likened to a powerful spotlight: as straight biography, the most powerful one yet to be used.

Even so, there are, perhaps unavoidably, distortions and a few black spots; there is the same two-dimensional quality as before. Part of this is to be found in the writing and proportion. Professor Quinn has attempted to give all the facts that are known, and to pass judgment upon those that are debatable. In general, his work has been excellently done: this book is the most reliable biography yet written, and one of the most interesting.

Possibly the sub-title is unfortunate. The author is properly critical of facts; in the biographical sense, the phrase is accurate. But in the usual sense of *critical*, it can hardly stand as complete. Although many of Poe's works are summarized and examined, very few are treated with critical acumen or insight. Another, more important defect has tended to swell the biography unneces-

sarily. Professor Quinn has allowed his own fondness for the stage to lead him into a disproportionate, though interesting, examination of the careers of Poe's father and mother, until the background seems in the beginning more important than the characters; and his desire to prove the scientific validity of "*Eureka*" has induced him to print letters from such modern scientists as Sir Arthur Eddington and Dr. C. P. Olivier. These letters clutter the present work with irrelevant and uncritical comment.

The positive value of the book is in its careful, detailed story of Poe's life. Professor Quinn is disposed to view his subject favorably, but his primary concern is to clarify the record. In part, this is accomplished by a liberal use of letters and documents; in a few instances, the author admits frankly that he does not know. This slow, cumulative method and this refusal to hazard guesses gives in the end more sense of reality than does Joseph Wood Krutch's exceedingly clever psychograph. Professor Quinn has also the advantage of greater knowledge. He has examined the Poe letters in the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and thus is in a position to show that Poe's love for his wife was a normal, masculine love, with certain variations from the norm that if anything add to Poe's stature; and to prove (as far as such matters can be proved) that Krutch's elaborate theory of Poe's genius being allied with impotence is a mis-reading of the evidence. Professor Quinn has examined the originals of the Griswold letters to and from Poe; he has printed in parallel columns the letters that were actually written, and the letters that were printed. This emphasis is needed. Griswold's distortions were based on a literal reality, and seemed to most readers convincing enough; by clever omissions and additions, he glorified himself and presented Poe as abnormal, fawning, and untrustworthy.

The virtue of Quinn's biography is that it increases Poe's validity as a man, without palliating his faults. It is not definitive, but it is easily the best work that we now have. If the protagonist does not stride through the book, he does on many pages walk slowly and humanly before us. The reader has need of patience, but he does not go unrewarded.

Until we have a reasonably complete and definitive edition of

Poe's letters, the most useful of the smaller lights will be interim publications of specific collections of letters. A. H. Quinn and Richard H. Hart have edited a fine selection of the letters and documents in the Enoch Pratt Free Library; although Professor Quinn levied on these for valuable material for his biography, he could not use all. A group of nine letters help to make clear Poe's relationship with his own family; twenty-eight letters give varying pictures of Poe as his contemporaries knew him, and described him shortly after his death. Facsimiles of the most important letters are included, and brief headnotes give relevant information.

A book of collateral interest is Lambert Wilmer's *MERLIN*, edited by Professor Mabbott. Wilmer, a Baltimore newspaperman, playwright, and friend of Poe, wrote a short verse play about Poe's engagement to Sarah Elmira Royster, and its abrupt termination by her parents while Poe was at the University of Virginia. As the title indicates, Wilmer revives the traditional enchanter; modeling his Merlin after Spenser's, he transports Merlin to the banks of the Hudson. A fictional cloak is thrown round the living characters, although the name Elmira is bestowed on the heroine; and there is little attempt at any real disguise. Basically, the play is of interest mainly through its associational nature. Wilmer's verse can be read without embarrassment, but it is pedestrian for all the borrowings from Shakespeare and Milton; his drama is slow, and lacks both development and revolution. In an appendix, Professor Mabbott prints Wilmer's defences of Poe's character, and all of Wilmer's known letters. This volume serves a double purpose: it throws as much light as we need on Lambert Wilmer, and it helps to illuminate Poe.

Miss Evans' *MUSIC AND EDGAR ALLAN POE* is primarily a record of Poe's influence on musicians, and a careful listing of the musical settings of Poe's poems, and of some adaptations of his stories. This study of Poe's extra-literary influence also emphasizes the importance of music on Poe's own work; it is definitely a work of reference, but thoroughly and capably done.

Another capable work of reference is *A CONCORDANCE OF THE POETICAL WORKS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE*. Professors Booth and Jones have worked conscientiously, using Killis Campbell's edi-

tion of Poe's Poems as a primary text, but including also every poem ascribed to Poe in *NOTES AND QUERIES* and in Mabbott's *SELECTED POEMS*. This leads to the inclusion of some exceedingly doubtful poems, but does no basic harm; a greater defect is the occasional mis-placing of lines, so that the reader will need to check the words above and below the particular word he is seeking. Otherwise, the concordance deserves praise, for it is an excellent reference tool, and a badly needed one.

In the superficial sense and to the general reader, none of these books is interesting. Professor Quinn has deliberately minimized the melodramatic events in Poe's life, and accepted the ordinary human qualities. Wilmer's play, though complete in itself, is reprinted not for its own worth but for extraneous reasons. The other books are essentially tools which will be helpful to scholars in a study of Poe's work, or in related fields. As such, they have a specific, if limited, validity, since they make available to us the materials on which any worthwhile knowledge must be founded. In this sense, all these books—especially Quinn's biography—have more real interest than many glib but derivative works that receive wide attention, but serve frequently to confuse rather than to enlighten the minds of readers.

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### AWAKE AND SINGING

*AWAKE! AND OTHER WARTIME POEMS.* By W. R. Rodgers. New York: Harcourt, Brace. 1942. 64 pp. \$1.50.

There is in the poems of W. R. Rodgers none of the hokum or false derring-do of which enthusiastic young writers in past wars were sometimes guilty. Instead, this volume speaks from a point of view clear-eyed yet restrained, and in large ways is deeply moving and strengthening. For example, it is striking that this young Ulsterman, all of whose poems date from the last three years, faces squarely the calamities of a conflict which

mainly involves his own generation and that he speaks with a sincerity and bravery totally convincing. The youth of today might with justice argue their own innocence, and it is only human nature to shift blame to the shoulders of others, but Rodgers eschews all mechanisms of defense or escape:

Be sure of this, that in peace or war, we  
Are where we are because of what we are.  
No censor can excerpt, or scissor-snip  
Excise this salient sentence from our lives.

He expresses, then, no pat theory of economic determinism *et al* as explanation for the new and dire events:

So War came,  
The late and urgent agent of Change, not  
Of Chance. So will it always come to wake  
The deep sleepers.

Indeed, of the numerous merits in his poetry, I am most impressed by his mood of resolute calm.

Mr. Rodgers says of himself that "It was in the late 'thirties that I came to contemporary poetry, and I no longer stood dumb in the tied shops of speech or felt stifled by the stale air of convention." And it is profoundly significant that this first war-poet of this present war (his book was first published in England in 1940, but the entire edition was destroyed in an enemy bombing) is so refreshingly free from the clichés of artificiality and agraphia stifling contemporary poetry, although it has been impossible for him (as, I believe, it will be for all future poets) to escape altogether the truly revolutionary influence of T. S. Eliot. Thus Rodgers works the pellucid trickery of paraphrase when he in one instance echoes Marvell and in a second Browning, as follows:

At our back-door we failed to hear  
War's dust-bin chariot drawing near.

The electric hare let loose to recapture  
Its first fine careless rapture.

But the reader need not have in memory either a recent "jazz" tune or Eliot's "Here we go round the prickly pear" to appreciate the devastating banality of our senseless past when he states:

We have done it ourselves and need expect  
No less, for the music goes round and round.

These blemishes are fortunately few and far between. I would like, nonetheless, to record my opinion that Rodgers fails in the two or three rhymed poems he attempts. However, by far the larger share of the poetry is markedly original, and I am persuaded that the alliteration and sturdy cadence of his verse derives, not from *Beowulf* necessarily, but from the inherent qualities of both our Anglo-Saxon language and our Anglo-Saxon tradition.

Yet another noteworthy feature of this arresting volume is the variety of its contents as well as the important connections he observes between the ubiquitous war and the quondam simple pleasures of "Spring", "Snow", and a "Summer day". Moreover, the poetic diction leaves no revolting impression of blood and tears even when Rodgers is most in contact with the horrendous reality of war. For example, there is no attempt at sensationalism nor unjustified display of horrors, but one otherwise knows the vivid backdrop of coruscating bombs or planes blinding-bright in such environmental phrases as "confetti-freckle of light", "Ten and lamb lump panic-struck", and "girls in banana-bright bandanas".

The least one can say of Rodgers is that his poetry contains much which is excellent and perhaps even great. Certainly he sets a high standard for war poets to follow, and if he survives the catastrophe which has inspired him, if he remains awake and singing, he may eventually reach true greatness. It is valuable to have in this Spring of 1942 the first American edition of *AWAKE! AND OTHER WARTIME POEMS*. If other war poets write nearly so ably as this young Irish opponent of totalitarianism, a higher order of literary excellence will then be established.

HALDEEN BRADY

